PARTISAN REVIEW

PR

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 1940

RAYNER HEPPENSTALL
English Nightmare

STEPHEN SPENDER
The Defense of Britain (a letter)

GUENTER REIMANN
The Fate of Conservative Man

PAUL GOODMAN
The Mean, the Maximum, and the Minimum

LIONEL TRILLING
"Elements That Are Wanted"

ALFRED KAZIN
Mr. Brooks's New England

●

TROTSKY IS DEAD

articles by

Dwight Macdonald and James T. Farrell

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TO OUR READERS

Beginning with the first issue of 1941 (January-February), PARTISAN REVIEW will be published under a new name:

the forties

We are making this change because the old name, pertinent when the magazine first appeared in 1934, has more recently led to many misunderstandings of the magazine's purpose and character.

Good titles for magazines are hard to discover. We think THE FORTIES is reasonably attractive and descriptive. But if any of our readers have any suggestions for a better name, we should be glad to consider them.

—The Editors

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VIEW

presents poets as commentators, not because poetry itself is not enough, but because now, more than ever, contemporary affairs should be viewed *through the eyes of poets.*

View represents a new journalism: news not necessarily about poetry but always by poets. Communiqués, as conditions permit, come from poet-correspondents all over the world: from Great Britain, France, Portugal, Japan, Egypt and other countries.

Special articles, with photographs, scheduled for early issues are: *A Questionnaire to Surrealists in America; Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* by Nicolas Calas; *An Interview with Marianne Moore* by Parker Tyler; *An Interview with Pavel Tchelitchew* by Hillary Arm; *Materia Poetica* by Wallace Stevens; *An Interview with William Carlos Williams* by Harvey Breit; *Metropolitan Midway* by Caresse Crosby; and *An Interview with Wallace Stevens* by Charles Henri Ford. Theater & Cinema, Music & Dance, Travel, Hearsay, Review of Reviews, etc., will be covered from time to time by: Forrest Anderson, John Peale Bishop, Kay Boyle, Georges Henein, Katue Kitasono and the Vou Club poets, George Marion O'Donnell, Harry Roskolenko, Gordon Sylander, Henry Treece and the New Apocalypse poets, William Carlos Williams and others.

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PARTISAN REVIEW

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Editors: F. W. DUPEE, DWIGHT MACDONALD, GEORGE L. K. MORRIS, WILLIAM PHILLIPS, PHILIP RAHV. Business Manager: NANCY MACDONALD.

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The Mean, The Maximum, and The Minimum

Paul Goodman

—"The maximum, the mean, and the minimum
are all good wisdom and destroy us
without sin!"

PAY-DAY, three young householders find that last month cost them only $42.50 each, for rent, food, etc., etc. We say "only" because this was an amount they were more than used to, but there is a mean in your life too.

The doorbell rings. Enter Normal and Robber and sit down without taking off their hats. Now there are five and Lew says: "Five of us could live like kings on $10 a week." Normal cries: "If I could get out of business, it would be Utopia!"—he is a little salesman in the commercial world that tends always to the great Extreme. Liv says: "We could play ball every clear day from April to October."

They are fascinated by the question of the Utopian life: to heighten by art, by juster proportions, a possible existence, an almost possible existence. What their life would be if they could pool just a few dividends!

Normal takes off his hat and opens the top button of his trousers; but Robber keeps his on because he has a date.

Liv's little brother is standing in the doorway secretly grinning.

They start with clothes: It isn't necessary to wear a tie; there are no buttons to lose on a pullover sweater; mocassins have no heels; and corduroy pants last forever. Robber looks distastefully at Liv's filthy yellow corduroy pants, gaping at the fly and ripped symmetrically at the knees. Liv wears these for a certain purpose and to be amusing.

"It might be better to live in sunny Italy," says Henry Faust. "No, there's no big-league ball." "Cincinnati's warm, but the Reds stink on ice."

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"It's practical!" Normal insists passionately; "you don't take it seriously, but I take it seriously. Where there are so many billions of dollars in Chicago, couldn't we come into $10 a week? But when you try to *earn* it, you soon have to try to make $18 or you're out. And where do you stop? Where do you stop? Once I thought if I had $10 a week, I'd be independent; I wouldn't know what to spend it on. But by the time I was making $18 a week I was thinking in terms of $35."

"Where do you stop?"

"The only thing is to go back to what you wanted when you were little."

"Ha!" thinks Liv's little brother in the doorway grinning, "that's what *he* thinks!"

"—a little regular income; the main thing is to be regular, so you know where you stand. I'd be satisfied with $8."

"If there was ten of us, we could live on $5."

"Where do you stop? Where do you stop?"

Liv has planned out the daily routine: "Our daily routine could be as follows: in the morning a game of ball. I could be captain of one team and Norm of the other. After lunch some reading. . . ."

He slips into the routine of a boys' camp he went to, and these are his juster proportions. (It was there he wore the yellow pants.)

". . . In the afternoon a little scrub-ball until the big game about four. At night you sit around and talk just like we're doing now. Every Sunday we go to see the Cubs or White Sox, whichever is at home." "I think we ought to do a little socially useful work just to make you feel right," says Normal; "two nights a week I'm willing to canvass for Labor's Non-Partisan League." "How many young men in 1937, dissatisfied with their jobs, are thinking of a life of the Golden Mean!"

Robber gets to his feet. "What about women?" says he.

"I knew you'd start that!" Normal cries. There follow the many dirty jokes. Anyway some women have sense and might even become Utopians. "Oh oh, trouble."

"Generally speaking," says Liv, "to be honest with ourselves, we go with girls just for screwing and not for companionship or talking, and they can't play ball."

"Well Abyssinia," says Robber, "I have a date."

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"Oh wait awhile," says Loose, "and I'll drive you."

Now Robber and the nameless little brother are standing in the doorway. In this pause—

In this pause, the formalities of baseball suddenly strike with force: "When the outfielders swing to the right, when the left-hander comes to bat—" "Nobody looks so good as a self-possessed catcher who holds the runners close." "What about the centerfielder starts at the crack o' the bat and takes the ball moving without a hurry,—I'm thinking of Tris Speaker, the Gray Eagle o' the Indians."

"Last week he fell off his house drunk and broke his head," says Liv's little brother.

"Oh, if you're talking about individuals, what about the Babe striking out?" "Herb Pennock, the Silver Fox of Kennett Square, stalling for the rain."

"The hit and run."

"The double-steal."

"The home-run that breaks up the ball game."

You see how the variety of both extremes is held within the rules.

"But the trouble with *our* game," says Norm and the tears start into his eyes, "is that nobody can play it; nobody but us five can get off from work; no matter how hard you try you can't escape it."

"Maybe we could organize them as Utopians. We could have a number of separate units."

"No no no. You can't find more than half a dozen who are willing to be reasonable. I see it in business every day."

"To you," says Robber, "it's reasonable; to me it stinks. I don't want to miss a thing."

"When they begin to talk baseball," thinks Lew, "I get so bored stiff."

The Golden Mean

The Golden Mean is to have just so much interest as a person is adequate to and turn to it his full attention; this isn't much, and demands rule and repetition.

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How the Mean Serves God

To know where one is, proportioning the self and the objects of desire, is prayer. Measure is the same as saying Grace.

How the Mean Is Both the Maximum and the Minimum

Thru the Mean we avoid the importunities of desire, which denial would make rage only the more, exposing us to impulses and accidents. Thus it is thru the Mean that we attain the Minimum. But the Mean reconciles warring opposites and avoids waste. Thus it is thru the Mean that we attain the Maximum.

Loose and Robber take their leave. "Lew, take me along!" screams Liv's little brother, vanishing downstairs after them. "Hey, where the hell do you think you're going?" cries Liv.

Norm says, "Robber's against Utopia."

"Yes, and he'll soon talk Lew out of it; that leaves only three."

"I didn't think your little brother was very much impressed either," says Henry Faust, "if you noticed him standing there laughing in his sleeve."

II.

Liv's little brother makes them let him off in the Loop. They can't understand what the 12-year-old boy can be after there, so late at night. But he goes straight to the great Department Store.

Here he knows the Night-Watchman, and for the price of some trivial intimacies is free to play thruout the great store. Besides, the watchman has a 14-year-old daughter whom the boy ardently loves.

Everything is in the great Department Store! to be got by the infinite power of money, which is exchangeable for all things and alone proportioned to the infinite appetite. The Department of Canned Fruits! the Department of Polymorphous Love! Little brother puts on a pair of roller-skates, to move more swiftly from pleasure to pleasure.

(It is Charley Chaplin who, in *Modern Times,* invented the idea of a Department Store as earthly paradise; in *Modern Times* he skates about the store like a graceful comic angel; in one scene he balances blindfold on the edge of an abyss, a comic angel. It is of course comic to have everything pell-mell, like Adam in the garden: for instance, an elephant with a writhing proboscis.)

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Like a giant little Roy sits with legs outstretched—the wheels still spinning on his feet, not unlike the fluttering ankle-wings of Hermes—on the floor among the toys in the Toy Department. Here's a toy farm, a house, a barn, orchard-trees, and animals. Put the man and his wife together in bed, take the cow from the field and put her in the barn; and dim the light: it is Night. Here is an illuminated electric-locomotive clattering on the rails. Here is a little War.

Huge Roy plays with our machines, with a derrick, an alcohol steam-engine. Here's a whole town; pell-mell he scatters the collection of so many houses, motorcars, and men and women about him on the floor. And here is a War, with tiny cannon that actually fire thru the empty store a loud report.

Here are the undistributed letters of a game of anagrams (the players of which do not realize how much they betray themselves in the words they create).

—Sailing on one foot with the other comically lifted behind, soaring with wide-stretched arms and baggy sleeves, speeding from pleasure to pleasure, comes our Charley Chaplin, and when he does so, no one can refrain from tears.—

On the fourth floor is the Furniture Department. In a silk-furnished ebony Empire bed in the form of a Sphinx, is sleeping the Night-Watchman's daughter. Roy kicks off his wheeled shoes. He loosens his belt and his trousers fall to the floor. Already his little penis is erect, like an inquisitive little animal.

Each of the polymorphous acts of love strives to the maximum; if a boy is well-educated by early corruption, they do not give way to each other. Each kind of pleasure, struggling to be more and more, passes finally into uncontrollable excess. The little body is afire, and now is the time for flaming thoughts. To play with the toys until an orgasm of uncontrollable excess. And to arrange the words to a moment of maximum pleasure.

The Maximum

To *have* each thing, to *turn* the attention to each thing, into each thing—is the Maximum. It is always in excess, for there is no room in the soul for a comparative measure.

Excess is the only prayer, because this is the thing that is given

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to us and not made by us; as it is said, "The earth is the *Lord's* and the fulness thereof."

Thus, it is thru the Maximum that we escape our too dear selves and so enjoy the Minimum.

The little boy is asleep, has escaped from the powerful desires of his dear body and soul. (Do not think that he is now without a strong and sweet sensation.) But it was necessary to undergo many arduous joys of the intelligence and lust to come at last to this home most have lost, on the very edge of death.

Six o'clock in the morning! With a loud clangor of the burglar-alarm the Watchman wakes the two children. Everywhere in the store is the daylight. And already—how soon!—as he takes the iron wheels from his shoes, the boy is laughing in his sleeve all day.

III.

Desiring to do without—perhaps as a method of punishment, and disgusted and weary with the continual consumption of goods in which he and every one else were consuming their lives, and not without a little envy of the rich, and also because he thought it was right to add this particular force to the general social conflict—Henry founded the National Industrial Boycott, an organization to destroy the bourgeois structure of society. The plan (a classical one, dating at least as far back as the *Fable of the Bees*) was simply to buy and consume as little as possible, the Minimum, and to spread this resolve as widely as possible. Then, since the productive system was geared not to necessities but to widely advertised superfluities, it would soon crack wide open.

To hear it *crack!* Henry confessed to himself that he had a lust for this particular sound.

A critical friend said: "Even granting, what is absurd, that you could get a following with this scheme of yours, can't you see that it's not capital that will be hurt first, but labor? You might as well recommend a war."

"Yes, a war of attrition, minus the violence (which always flies to the Maximum)."

"You mean: all the poor people are to starve by principle as well as necessity."

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Not answering, Henry cried: "All the same! If we don't all learn how much they have bullied us into needing, we'll still have subways even in the Socialist republic."

He took to wearing one suit and to living on the diet figured out by the experts of the Relief agencies.

He was a 1940 urban Thoreau, but omitted the idea of individual independence which to the transcendentalists had seemed the highest good, but to Henry pure egotism. "I wonder what deep desire to see their fellow-citizens doing without inspired *them?*" he asked himself; and with nervous joy read Hawthorne's biting observations on Brook Farm; "yet Hawthorne was the first nihilist of them all, too Calvinist to approve even of privation!"

Doing Without

All the same! N.I.B. gained a little headway and they began to *nibble,* as they boasted, at the economy. Several thousand bourgeois Americans, who were sympathetic to any and every effort to destroy the existence for which all had the deepest unconscious disgust, decided to keep their 1939-model automobiles for another season! These cars, built to last one year and be traded in, soon broke down; whereupon the manufacturers, by way of counter-propaganda, instructed their mechanics to be insulting to all who drove in for repairs, and even to be "out of stock" on those old parts, and they waged a safety-campaign in the state legislatures. There was a certain amount of chaos: fly-by-night mechanics set up shop; some drivers, having used the omnibus once or twice, neglected their cars altogether.

Likewise, among these same people, there spread a movement to read the books on their book-shelves instead of buying new fiction. All were amazed to discover the pages of Anthony Trollope, etc., completely unopened; and soon there was much lay literary criticism, contrasting in "meatiness" the 19th-century masters and the 20th, represented by Margaret Ayer Barnes. Clifton Fadiman loyally championed the moderns, but soon lost his job anyway, since the publishing business was so leaky that it couldn't survive even this tempest.

But there were a few poor people who for a time were freed by the suggestion not to want certain things obviously desirable. They experienced an enormous relief of competitive tension—a

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relief almost like that of evangelism. (And perhaps in the long run this experience will still bear some influence.) But these people were not large consumers in any case; nor could they transmit their free feeling to their children, but rather an even stronger lust which comes of being deprived of what one sees all about.

In the end all lapsed from N.I.B., perhaps even into excesses that they had never before practised. (Perhaps also this was the measure of success desired by Henry.)

He complained bitterly: "Once they have experienced a sensation, all—all except myself—find it impossible not to have at least this satisfaction as well as all the rest. How can you hope for political reform with such people?"

His friend said: "On the contrary, yours is the self-defeating plan. Why do you want to overturn the state? Because the people have too little; and to accomplish this you teach them to want even less. On the contrary the great hope for change is just to demand *more;* this is what the profit system can't survive."

Henry said: "Do you think that the way to the Maximum of pleasure is not always thru the Minimum? Let me tell you a parable.—

"There was a Zwinglian minister during the Reformation who decided to dismantle his church. (Indeed he determined to tear down the building.) And first he dismissed the choir and took off his vestments, and stripped the altar, and took down the paintings, and burned the illuminated manuscripts. With a sinking heart, he thought of dispensing with the organ; he recoiled from it, but since the Holy Ghost had once put the idea in his head, he had them take out the organ also. In anguish he shattered the pictorial windows with stones; at first he said he would replace them with plain glass, but now that there were not even windows, it was impossible to go back. Instead, he secretly decided to push down the walls! He was afraid to announce this to the grumbling congregation. He waited until a Sunday, when all were within the church and could not see what was taking place outside; and he ascended the pulpit to preach. Then his workmen, not profaning the day with this destructive work—for the *Lord* said, Make No Graven Image—proceeded, amid loud noises, to tear down the edifice. Bricks and plaster fell on the worshipers. The walls fell outward; the frame rent and col-

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lapsed amid the shrieks of all; there was a loud *Crack!* And there, roundabout, were the broad fields and the orchard trees, the village, the clouds, and the sun. . . ."

"Very pretty," said Henry's friend. "You remind me of a celebrated argument of the philosopher MacTaggart on survival after death. The fact that all experience is sensory and that the sense-organs decay, says he, is no proof that there could not be experience after death; for this is like saying that we cannot see without windows just because a person inside a house cannot see except thru windows. Rather, MacTaggart asks, who knows what our experience will be like when once we have got rid of these sense-organs!"

"Do you think that is such a stupid argument?" said Henry, laughing up his sleeve.

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Trotsky Is Dead

An Attempt at an Appreciation

Dwight Macdonald

ONE HAS CONSTANTLY to remind one's self that Trotsky is dead. One had somehow taken it for granted that "the Old Man" would always be there, in Coyoacan, representing the Marxist revolutionary tradition. Even after the wild machine-gun raid organized by the Stalinists earlier in the summer, one's sense of Trotsky's permanence did not change. It seemed natural that he should miraculously escape the storm of bullets. How could a consciousness as lofty and all-embracing as Trotsky's, a career and a personality constructed on such a scale, how could these be dependent on the mere survival of a mortal body? How could a whole culture be murdered?

It is hard to understand that Trotsky is dead for another reason: because it is hard to realize he died only a few weeks ago. He was the last of the giants of revolutionary Marxism. Already it seems incredible that the man who died in a suburb of Mexico City last month made the October revolution with Lenin, headed the Soviet of St. Petersburg Workers in the 1905 revolution, and edited *Iskra* with Lenin, Martov, Axelrod, and Vera Zassulitch, who in 1878, a year before Trotsky was born, had assassinated the Czar's prime minister. Jackson's axe set a period to a long chapter of history.

But the atrocious act—atrocious in the love affair Jackson carried on for two years merely in order to prepare the murder, atrocious in the double betrayal of human and political confidences, atrocious in the peculiarly brutal method used in the actual murder—this act had more than symbolic significance. When Trotsky was killed, he was no old man, living in the past, remembered only because he once played a great role. He was, as he had been all

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his conscious existence, an active participant in events. The regime of the Kremlin, whose ultimate corruption is sealed by this murder, had practical reasons for disembarrassing itself of Trotsky in this period of world-wide convulsion. Trotsky was the one man still living whose name and prestige could have become a rallying-point for a mass revolution in almost any part of the world, and especially in Russia. And even more important, as long as he lived, there was a center of revolutionary Marxist consciousness in the world, a voice which could not be frightened or corrupted into silence.

Trotsky was born on October 26, the day on which, thirty-eight years later, the Bolsheviks took the Winter Palace. His death came at an equally symbolic moment, in the dead center of that storm which is razing the whole structure of European society. He died after the fall of Paris and before the bombing of London, and it would be hard to say which event is the more terrible confirmation of the basic validity of the Marxist viewpoint Trotsky represented: the capitulation without a shot of the citadel of Western culture, or the slow destruction of the great city which was the capital of both the British Empire and of international capitalism.

"For the first time," wrote Rosa Luxemburg during the last war, "the destructive beasts that have been loosed by capitalist Europe over all other parts of the world have sprung, with one awful leap, into the midst of the European nations. . . . This civilized world has just begun to know that the fangs of the imperialist beast are deadly, that its breath is frightfulness, that its tearing claws have sunk deep into the breasts of its own mother, European culture." If this could be said of the last war, what can be said of this one, in which the victorious Nazis are reducing the other nations of Europe to the political and economic position of subject colonial nations, when such cities as Warsaw, Rotterdam, and now London are laid waste in a few days or weeks or even minutes? Today more than ever is it necessary to learn the hard lesson that Trotsky devoted his life to teaching: that the fabric of our capitalist society is so rotten it cannot be patched up, that in world revolution, "permanent revolution" by the oppressed masses lies the only hope for mankind.

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Rarely is an entire historical movement concentrated in the person of a single individual as revolutionary Marxism in our time was concentrated in the person of Trotsky. Should Stalin be assassinated tomorrow, he could be replaced by any one of a dozen colleagues. So too with Hitler. These men have been raised to power less for their individual qualities than because they are the *type* demanded by certain historical forces. Trotsky's characterization of Stalin as "the supreme expression of the mediocrity of the apparatus" is just, as is his comment on Hitler: "Another political figure would be hard to find that is in the same measure the focus of anonymous historical forces. Not every exasperated petty bourgeois could have become Hitler, but a particle of Hitler is lodged in every exasperated petty bourgeois." Were some accident to befall these men, the historical afflatus, with some help from the Minister of Propaganda, could seek out another vehicle with not too much difficulty. Every one has heard the story that there are two, three, a half dozen replicas of the "real" Hitler (who is even declared to have died years ago) who appear in public in his place. Whatever the truth of these tales, it is significant that they are not considered entirely impossible. There might conceivably be a stand-in for Hitler. Never for Trotsky. At the first sentence of his first article, at the first interview on world events, the fraud would have been detected.

Or imagine Stalin or Hitler in exile. Would they exercise any influence on the consciousness of our times? Would any one seek their views on world events except as a journalistic curiosity? Would, most brutal test, any one read their books? We know that Napoleon on St. Helena is remembered chiefly for his quarrels with the miltary governor. These men have been able to change the world, but they have nothing to say to the world. Like most great historical figures, they are specialists, their talents and temperaments narrowed to achieve certain ends in a certain favorable historical period. As individuals, they are disappointing. Napoleon's aphorisms are interesting to us because they were uttered by Napoleon. Stalin's writings aren't interesting even for this reason.

Trotsky was less "specialized" in this sense than any historical personage that comes to mind. For the power that Trotsky exercised in the last decade of his life was a power independent of all the apparatus of power, an individual triumph of intellect and

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heart and will. Remarkable as was his career as the organizer of the October revolution and of the military defense of that revolution in the Civil War, even more remarkable was the richness of personality, the vigor and brilliancy of mind, the moral steadfastness, the bold and passionate devotion to the revolutionary cause in a period of worldwide reaction—all those qualities which came out so triumphantly in the years of exile, in Prinkipo, in France, in Norway, and finally in Mexico. As a man, Trotsky was always greater than his actions, great as these were.

We are slowly coming to realize that, in this period, Trotsky was irreplaceable. There is no one to take his place, no intellectual leader who even pretends to the succession. When the GPU axe penetrated Trotsky's brain, it extirpated a great deal more than the life of a sixty-one year old Jewish exile named Lev Davidovitch Bronstein.

Trotsky's personal quality comes out when we compare him with a bourgeois statesman whose talents and career have a curious similarity to his own, namely, Winston Churchill. Like Trotsky, Churchill is a master of words, both in oratory and writing, and also a formidable man of action. The defense of Britain organized with such imagination and vigor by Churchill is comparable to Trotsky's defense of the young Soviet Union. Churchill's history of the last war, *The World Crisis*, is comparable in scope and rhetorical power to Trotsky's history of the 1917 revolution. Both men are especially impressive as individuals, conscious of their own intellectual power, contemptuous of the restraints and prudences of organizationally-minded people. The attitude of the British middle classes towards Churchill, a mingled admiration and distrust of his "cleverness," is a parody of the attitude of the Old Bolsheviks towards Trotsky, also an "outsider" much too brilliant and domineering to be either brushed aside or accepted. And just as Trotsky, for years isolated and distrusted, was perforce accepted as their leader by the Old Bolsheviks when the revolutionary crisis demanded his extraordinary talents, so Churchill, similarly isolated throughout his long career in British politics, finally had to be given supreme power when the Empire entered on its life and death struggle.

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But it is significant of the superiority, both intellectual and moral, of Marxist revolutionary culture over bourgeois culture that the resemblance is only—a resemblance. While Trotsky all his life worked for his principles, with intellectual consistency and a superb disregard for the effects on his career, Churchill's political career has been opportunistic to the point of cynicism. There is a good deal of the adventurer about Churchill, something slick and cheap and vulgar in a grandiose way, like Cecil Rhodes. There is a vast difference in quality, also, between their histories. Churchill's style is the rhetoric of a politician gifted with an exceptional ear for language and a fine sense of drama; it is always a little too grand for its content, a little too strained in its effort to rise to the great occasions. His rhetoric is the inflated "official" kind: "the smiling fields of France," "every British heart burned for Belgium," etc. It is saved only by the vigor and elan of the narrative and the bold design, which, for all the coarseness of the detail, does manage to convey the sweep of events. Trotsky's historical writing has all the virtues of Churchill's, and also a solidity, a restraint and mature power which are quite lacking in the Englishman's style.

So, too, with their understanding of history. Churchill is fascinated with the technical apparatus of war, the strategic moves and counter-moves; in his pages war becomes a gigantic game. His historical concepts are based on a Kiplingesque enthusiasm for "glory," "Old England," and so on. It is clear he has accepted the social concepts of his class and era without the slightest reflection. (His lack of consciousness in these matters, indeed, makes it possible for him to be the free-lance opportunist he is, shifting without apparent difficulty from the extreme right wing of Tory imperialism to his present amicable collaboration with the Labor Party.) Trotsky has all the sensibility of Churchill to the external drama of great events, but he has also an understanding of the meaning of these events. He is conscious of what his opponents think as well as of what he thinks, and of the general pattern which overlays both viewpoints. Where Churchill is interested in the drama of events, Trotsky is more interested in the drama of the historical forces behind the events. Of Churchill one thinks, "remarkable that a politician should write so well"; of Trotsky, "remarkable that an intellectual should be so gifted in politics."

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All the superiority of Marxist to bourgeois culture is implicit in the comparison.

When the young Trotsky arrived at the Lenins' flat in London, fresh from Siberia, he was greeted with: "The Pero has arrived!" "Pero" means "pen" in Russian; it was Trotsky's nickname in the movement. And towards the close of his career, asked by the Dewey Commission to state his occupation, Trotsky answered: "Author." Almost all the great Marxist revolutionaries have been talented as writers, but with no other, neither Lenin nor Marx nor Luxemburg nor even Engels, was the fusion of literary man and revolutionist so complete as with Trotsky. His natural element was language, spoken or written. Those who heard him addressing the crowds in Red Square or the Party congresses, say he was one of the great orators of the century. But a politician in exile—and thirty-one out of the forty-five years of Trotsky's adult life were passed either in prison or in exile—doesn't have many opportunities to make speeches. During three-fourths of his career, Trotsky was able to take part in events only through the written word. It was enough, however. Up to 1927, when publication was discontinued, the State Publishing House in Moscow had issued eighteen volumes of Trotsky's "Collected Works." A formidable harvest, and yet the most famous writings were still to come: *The Real Situation in Russia, The Third International After Lenin, My Life, The History of the Russian Revolution, The Revolution Betrayed*, not to mention literally dozens of pamphlets on political developments in England, France, Spain, Germany, and the biographies of Lenin and of Stalin on which he was working when he was murdered. "Beginning with 1897," he wrote in his autobiography, "I have waged the fight chiefly with a pen in my hand."

As leader, organizer, administrator, technician, Trotsky was easily first among his comrades of 1917, excepting Lenin; as a writer he was even more easily first, and here Lenin is included. This man of furious action was also an intellectual, a student "rather pedantic and conservative in my habits." This passionate doer, this incarnation of revolutionary will and energy who planned and directed the October revolution and created the Red Army which beat back the counter-revolution on a dozen fronts,

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was also a literary man, with all the professional delight of a man of letters in owning books and in turning over the pages of a freshly printed volume. For relaxation on the military train that bore him from one front to another, he read French novels. Between sessions of the peace conference at Brest-Litovsk he dictated a new book. He tells us how, deep in the Siberian wilderness, he studied Marx for the first time, "brushing the cockroaches off the pages." Trotsky's view of prison life would not be understood by many wardens—or inmates. "I left the hermetically sealed cell of solitary confinement in the Peter-Paul fortress with a tinge of regret," he writes. "It was so quiet there, so eventless, so perfect for intellectual work." He himself has drawn us the best picture of this complex dual personality: "One might say that my life was rather full of adventures. But I must say that, by natural inclination, I have nothing in common with seekers after adventure. I am rather pedantic and conservative in my habits. I like and appreciate discipline and system. Not to provide a paradox, but because it is a fact, I must add that I cannot endure disorder or destruction. . . . A well-written book in which one can find new ideas, and a good pen with which to communicate one's own ideas to others, for me have always been and are today the most valuable and intimate products of culture. The desire for study has never left me, and many times in my life I felt that the revolution was interfering with my systematic work."

It would take a long article, and one that I hope some day will be written, to consider adequately Trotsky's literary style. It would be exaggerating to say that all of Trotsky's immense literary production—a critical bibliography is another need—is written in a great style. But a remarkable amount of it is. The adjective that comes first to every one's mind is "brilliant." His turn for witty characterizations is well known, as in his description of the late Morris Hillquit as "the ideal Socialist leader for successful dentists." Or his comment on Nazi racial theories: "Rejecting 'economic thought' as a base, National Socialism descends a stage lower—from economic materialism it appeals to zoologic materialism." His metaphors are daring. Only a supremely self-confident writer could carry off the figure with which he describes Lenin's

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attitude at the Finland Station: "Lenin endured the flood of eulogistic speeches like an impatient pedestrian waiting in the doorway for the rain to stop." He knew how to contrast the general and the particular, how to unite grand historical abstractions with homely details, often in one sentence, as when he writes of "The pauperization of the German petty bourgeoisie, barely covered by ties and socks of artificial silk. . . ."

The chief defect of his writing, in fact, is perhaps an excessive energy and ingenuity of expression, so that the style sometimes obscures the development of the thought. Individual paragraphs, sentences, and phrases, distract attention from the general design by their brilliant display. But whether obscured or not, the structure is usually there: the most casual of Trotsky's articles are distinguished from most products of leftwing journalism in that they are equipped with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Even in his testimony before the Dewey Commission this instinctive sense of form appears. And always, informing the style and raising it to a high level, the historical imagination is at work. Has any better characterization of fascism been made than Trotsky's summary, tossed off in a long-forgotten magazine article: "Fascism has opened up the depths of society for politics. Today, not only in peasant huts but also in the city skyscrapers there lives alongside of the twentieth century the tenth or the thirteenth. A hundred million people use electricity and still believe in the magic power of signs and exorcisms. What inexhaustible reserves they possess of darkness, ignorance and savagery!"

As a polemist, Trotsky had few if any equals. Bernard Shaw, a competent judge in such matters, awarded Trotsky the palm over Marx himself: "In everything but length of wind, the pupil surpasses the master. . . . Trotsky has a much better temper. Marx hit where he could and often hit spitefully; Trotsky does not hit below the belt." Shaw also noted "the gaiety of his controversial style." Although Trotsky at times was guilty of the sort of venomous, turgid abuse which has become, unhappily, part of the Marxist tradition—as in his attack last year on Serge and Souvarine—Shaw's appreciation is on the whole a just one. His polemical style is considerably more civilized than Lenin's: he does not try to strip his antagonist of all human dignity; he usually maintains an easy witty, even genial, tone; there is more of Voltaire about

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him than of Jeremiah. A certain gaiety is indeed a feature of his style, as in this characterization: "Bukharin's nature is such that he must always attach himself to something. . . . You must always keep your eye on him, or else he will succumb quite imperceptibly to the influence of some one directly opposed to you, as other people fall under an automobile." Lenin would have denounced Bukharin as a "renegade," and not once but many times. Trotsky's method is not only more effective, but it is also less open to abuse. To some extent he moderated—often not enough—and humanized the sharp, almost brutal tone of Marxist polemics, a tone that has by now become a real debit to the movement.

Trotsky's claim to greatness as a political thinker rests on a long series of books and pamphlets, stretching from his history of the 1905 revolution through his writings on the Chinese revolution, the march to power of German fascism, and the course of the French Popular Front, up to his culminating exposures of the Stalinist degeneration in *The Revolution Betrayed* and his writings on the Moscow Trials. For international scope, for brilliance, solidity, and sheer volume, this body of work has no parallel in the literature of Marxism. But perhaps the most spectacular demonstration of his powers was his conception of "the permanent revolution."

When the young Trotsky—twenty-seven years old—came out in 1906 with his theory of "the permanent revolution," he was almost universally considered an ultra-left visionary. Yet his was a remarkable intellectual achievement: a decade before the 1917 revolution, he predicted both its occurrence and the way in which it might degenerate. Not only did he insist it would be a proletarian socialist revolution, but also that, once it was made, it would prove possible to create a socialist order in Russia only if similar revolutions in more advanced nations came to the aid of the Russian workers. If this did not happen, he predicted degeneration and reaction in Russia—a prophecy which needs little underlining today.

For his theory Trotsky received no support in either wing of the Russian Social Democracy. While differing radically on the form of state to be set up after the next revolution, the Bolsheviks

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and the Mensheviks agreed that it would be a middle-class democratic regime, which would not, could not abolish private property. It seemed logical that, after feudal Czarism had been overthrown, backward Russia would first have to go through a bourgeois democratic stage of evolution before it would be ripe for socialist revolution. Trotsky, however, insisted that precisely because Russia was so extremely backward the revolutionary tasks that would arise after the Czar's downfall would prove too enormous to be coped with by the weak Russian bourgeoisie within the framework of middle class property relations. Just as the "law of combined development" had enabled such Russian big industry as there was to leap over all historical intervening stages and at one bound to reach a level of technology and concentration equal to the most advanced European industry, so the same law would operate in politics, and backward, primitive "holy Russia" would overleap bourgeois democracy and make the transition in one mighty bound from feudalism to the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was a daring conception and it is not surprising that no one took it very seriously—until it happened.

When the 1917 revolution came, Lenin, who had fought Trotsky's permanent-revolution theory for years, quickly came to see it was correct and adopted it, while Trotsky, who had long opposed Lenin's organizational views, saw that Lenin had built the political instrument to make the revolution and at once joined the Bolshevik Party. (One wishes, indeed, that Trotsky, whose pre-1917 objections to the undemocratic, bureaucratic features of Leninism sound prophetic today, had not accepted Leninism so uncritically, had not tried to become the firmest of firm Bolsheviks.) When Lenin produced his famous "April Theses" soon after his arrival in Russia, the Old Bolsheviks quite correctly scented in them more than a whiff of "Trotskyism." For a time Lenin was as isolated as Trotsky had been for years, and, like him, considered an ultra-left dreamer. But events moved fast, even the Old Bolsheviks saw the drift, Trotsky appeared on the scene and joined Lenin's party, and the two leaders went on together to organize and lead to victory the October revolution.

Now the other part of the "permanent revolution" theory came into play. Trotsky never attempted to deny that Russia was too backward to maintain for very long a political form so ad-

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vanced as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Therefore, the revolution must be "permanent" in the sense of spreading into the more advanced European nations. Unless the newborn Soviet state could break through the chain of capitalist nations surrounding it and establish contact, on a socialist basis, with some more advanced European nation, the battle was lost. "Without direct political aid from the European proletariat," Trotsky had written in 1906, "the workingclass of Russia will not be able to retain its power and to turn its temporary supremacy into a permanent Socialist dictatorship." The Russian revolution must be the spark that lit the fires of world revolution. Failing this, the revolutionary regime would degenerate. Against this theory, also accepted by Lenin, Stalin later counterposed the conception of "building socialism in one country." History has tested these opposing theories, and the verdict is no longer in doubt.

The last years of Trotsky's life, for all the vigor and brilliance of his fight against Stalinism and his comment on world events, cannot be accounted a success. His movement not only failed to win the masses, but it also more and more lost prestige even with the intellectual avant-garde. It is true that it is a reactionary period, and that much is explained by this fact. But I think another factor is also involved: the failure of Trotsky's political thinking to cope with the basic changes in politics and economics which have come about since the last war. There is no space to go into this fully here—in the last issue I indicated some of the ways I think Trotsky's theories have become inadequate, and there will be more to say on the subject later—but, to give a rounded and honest view of the man, a few words seem to be in order.

The tragedy of Trotsky as a political thinker seems to me to be that he understood so much and yet did not understand enough, that he probed boldly and deeply and yet did not go deep enough. As Edmund Wilson observes in his interesting study of Trotsky in *To the Finland Station:* "He is one of those men of the first rank who flourish inside a school, neither creating nor breaking out of its system." Trotsky was a great political thinker in the sense that he took a given body of doctrine, the revolutionary Marxism of the pre-1914 period, and used it to interpret events with the

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greatest realism and penetration. But he was apparently incapable of examining the instrument itself, of scrutinizing with empirical scepticism the given doctrine. (Lenin was much more the scientist in this respect.) There was always something rigid, mechanical, doctrinaire about Trotsky's approach to basic theory, as when, during the factional struggle within the Socialist Workers Party last winter, he actually insisted on making a key issue out of the acceptance or rejection of the Marxist dialectic.

As long as the "classic" Marxist formulae corresponded with the development of history, Trotsky's inadequacies were not apparent. But when, in the last ten years, new forms of class rule began to take shape in Russia and Germany, forms which have not developed as might have been expected by the old formulae, then the failure of Trotsky to reshape his basic theories to cope with these new phenomena became increasingly serious.

Thus although Trotsky understood better than any other leader the dangers of Stalin's abandonment of international revolution in favor of "building socialism in one country," he lost his long fight against Stalinism in part because he consistently underestimated its threat. He was fighting inside the leading committees when he should have been talking to the Party, he was talking to the Party when he should have summoned the proletarian non-Party masses into action. Even after his exile, it took him years to break organizationally with the Third International. This curious reluctance to draw the full conclusions from his own political analysis, I think, was based on the fact that he never conceived of more than two alternatives in the Soviet Union: either progress to socialism or retrogression to capitalism. In the factional struggle inside Russia in the twenties, Trotsky and the other left oppositionists charged that Stalin's policies were leading to the restoration of capitalism. But once Stalin had smashed the opposition and exiled Trotsky, he reversed his policies and began to turn sharply "left," putting into effect the Four Year Plan Trotsky had long advocated. The development of Russia since 1928 has been not towards socialism, it is true, but not towards capitalism either. Trotsky, concerned with the forms of property, to his death insisted that Russia was "a degenerated workers state." But Stalin, in my opinion, has created a new form of class exploitation—call it "bureaucratic collectivism" for lack of a better term—and only

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on this basis can the development of the USSR in the last ten years be understood.

So, too, with the development of fascism in Germany. When one reads Trotsky's analysis of the class forces and anti-fascist strategy in the last years before Hitler took power—I am thinking of his three long studies of 1932: "Germany, the Key to the International Situation," "The Only Road for Germany," and "Germany—What Next?"—one marvels at his realism and penetration. His proposal for a united front of the Communists and the Social Democracy against the Nazis, his demolition of the Stalinist idea of "social fascism," his realization that Hitler was more than a tool of finance capital and that his victory would mean a long period of deep reaction ("After Hitler, our turn!" said the Stalinists)—all of this makes impressive reading today. And yet, once Hitler had won power and the Nazi state began its evolution, Trotsky's understanding of it seemed to cease.* After the 1934 "blood purge," when the petty bourgeois radicals were crushed by Hitler, Trotsky expected the beginning of the end. And in the terms of "classic" Marxism, it was a reasonable assumption. The Nazis had been forced by their big business backers to liquidate their mass base; this would mean the regime would assume an increasingly Bonapartist character, the class struggle would become ever sharper, and the end of the dictatorship ever nearer. But, just as Stalin liquidated the kulaks and the NEP without thereby advancing one step towards socialism, so Hitler curbed the petty bourgeois radicals without thereby turning in a big business direction. Since 1936, indeed, a "blood purge" without either blood or dramatics has been going on at the expense of the businessmen and bankers who financed Hitler's rise to power.

In both these cases, it seems to me, Trotsky understood fully the immediate political issues. But he was unable to reshape the instrument of "classic" Marxism so as to fit the new forms of society that are arising in Russia and Germany. The very penetration of his analysis of the secondary political factors blinded him to its basic defects. The outbreak of the second world war revealed in a sudden, dramatic way the inadequacies of Trotsky's basic

*His interest, too. It is significant that, although he wrote so copiously on the political problems of the last year before Hitler took power, he seems to have paid little attention to the internal development of the Nazi state since 1933; at least I know of no studies by Trotsky of any length on the subject.

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theories. The war brought a crisis both in Trotsky's thinking and in the movement he led. The two great surprises of the war so far: the imperialist role played by the Soviet Union, and the quick and overwhelming success of the Nazi blitzkrieg in Europe—for neither of these was Trotsky prepared. He rejected the idea that a "workers state" (degenerated) *could* play an imperialist role in war, insisting that, come what may, the Red Army must be supported, and permitting the American section of the Fourth International—the only sizable Trotskyist group left in the world—to split in half on the issue. And his reaction to the blitzkrieg was simply to write a lengthy manifesto denouncing the "imperialist war" in traditional terms, a document which could have been written just as well five or ten years ago.

In his little book, *Reminiscences of Tolstoy*, Maxim Gorky, describing his feelings on first hearing the news of Tolstoy's death, tells of watching the old man ("his smallish, angular figure in a gray, crumpled ragged suit") sitting one day by the seashore, "looking into the distance out to sea":

> . . . I cannot express in words what I felt rather than thought at that moment; in my soul there was joy and fear, and then everything blended in one happy thought: "I am not an orphan on the earth, as long as this man lives on it."
>
> Then I walked on tiptoe away, in order that the pebbles might not scrunch under my feet, not wishing to distract his thoughts. And now I feel I am an orphan, I cry as I write—never before have I cried so inconsolably and in such bitter despair. I do not know whether I loved him; but does it matter, love of him or hatred? He always roused in me sensations and agitations which were enormous, fantastic; even the unpleasant and hostile feelings which he roused were of a kind not to oppress but rather to explode the soul; they made it more sensitive and capacious.

So it is, making allowances for a certain amount of mysticism and sentimentality in Gorky's account, that even those of us who came to disagree most sharply with Trotsky on important matters, felt about him. "Even the unpleasant and hostile feelings which he roused were of a kind not to oppress but rather to explode the soul." And he was a father to many of us in the sense that he taught us our political alphabet and first defined for us the problems to be solved, so that even when, in the manner of sons, we

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came to reject the parental ideas, our very rejection was in the terms he taught us. "I am not an orphan on the earth so long as this man lives on it."

It is strangely moving to read today, in *My Life*, Trotsky's account of how, as a schoolboy, he first came into contact with the workingclass movement.

> It happened in this way. I was walking along the street with a younger member of our commune, Gregory Sokolovsky, a boy about my age.
>
> It's about time we started," I said.
>
> "Yes, it's about time," he answered.
>
> "But how?"
>
> "That's it, how?"
>
> "We must find workers, not wait for anybody or ask anybody, but just find workers and set to it."
>
> "I think we can find them," said Sokolovsky. "I used to know a watchman who worked on the boulevard. He belonged to the Bible Sect. I think I'll look him up."

Towards the close of his life, in his testimony before the Dewey Commission, Trotsky, again recalling this incident of his boyhood, summed up his entire career and faith:

> Ladies and gentlemen of the Commission! The experience of my life, in which there has been no lack either of success or of failures, has not only not destroyed my faith in the clear, bright future of mankind, but, on the contrary, has given it an indestructible temper. This faith in reason, in truth, in human solidarity, which at the age of eighteen I took with me into the workers' quarters of the provincial Russian town of Nikolaiev—this faith I have preserved fully and completely. It has become more mature but not less ardent. In the very fact of your Commission's formation . . . I see a new and truly magnificent reinforcement of the revolutionary optimism which constitutes the fundamental element of my life.

From the schoolboy who went to seek out the workers ("not wait for anybody or ask anybody, but just find workers and set to it") to the veteran revolutionary, grand in his exile, confessing his "faith in reason, in truth, in human solidarity," Leon Trotsky's life was all of one piece. A career like his makes one believe, even in times like these, in the dignity and the capacities of the human race.

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Harold Rosenberg

THE UNLEARNING

Pistol: Old I do wax, and from my weary limbs
Honor is cudgelled

I.

Who loves life is cunning: Odysseus,
For instance, of all the Greeks
Most lustful of duration, therefore most subtle;
No singing he did not hear, no luxury
Not abandoned, out of love of life;
Escapist, worshipper, classical Jacob; shrewd
And with a final bed. Or Socrates—

The mirror of our age is loneliness
And non-being; and flocks walk down in it
And disappear. Here the ego, that illusion,
Has no grapple with the earth,
But finds glory absolute
In passing neatly from one phase
To another of power. While the flesh,
Hairy impediment, puts by its avarice
For the pure costume of the public role.

If ranks of young men their arms linked together
In comradeship of the blank sky
And the wordless joy of muscles
Deploy like dancers in the breathless meadows,
Also husbands with mustaches
Without a quaver after ripeness
Leap, sunstruck, into a handful of air—
This is not man in his stoutness evolved
To elegance and honor. It is rather
As if a football lifted itself off a table
And took flight through a broken window.

Pure and plastic, transparent and crying aloud
They run, squirting fire from toys,

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Then fade ineffectually
As the buildings fall. Young men
And even girls
Without the cunning fed by deep root-reaching
And the not entirely glorious love
Of life, sole giver of glory.

II.

The simplification of babies begins!

Shall this then be the one effect
Of pulling heaven down: that death
And glory shall keep their place no longer
At the end, or at least at that point near the middle
Where ends join a new rise of the curve?
The celestial collapse has brought
A dumb finality upon the streets,
And boys and girls unlearn their crafty search
For one another.
Imagine!

The angels are not yet vaporised.
The monuments on which we wrote our names
In chalk, the marks commemorating Us,
Are now wiped clean by other boys
With white dust on their shoulders
And stares daffy with space.

Hordes, barrack-loads of greatness!
Deltas of the immortal, dumps of divinity!
And the miraculous ruses of rotation unlearned, forgotten.

The lover of life has cunning, is not
A once-mandated messenger of no-time,
Gives not his perfect flesh as clay
For the statue's stained and reeking base,
Its corners full of ants;
Hopes not to fashion a whiteness in the city—
A streak of abandon, and a lackey's grave.

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Jackson Mathews

TO WILFRED OWEN

A week after they killed you by the canal
Not war stopped but pity of war stock still.

There was a boy, eleven, on a Georgia farm
Mocking the mocking-bird, racing the worm
To school the morning a bullet put the stop
To what you were doing, giving your men a slap
And a 'well done, my boy, very well done.'
That morning your strange meeting was with no one:
You turned from the straitened water, face away
And thunder in your lungs, and fell like day.

That boy did not feel the earth quake with your thud,
Not because you fell as you did in mud
But . . . the pity of war one pity of war
Is that pity carries
not very far.
Yet poems you left for pity above the ground
When you went under in mud and thunder drowned,
Found him in Oregon, Owen, carried to Oregon
Through years that made him grown and you more gone.

But pity, the pity, your only begotten son
Is an old man now, amnesic, undone,
Begging door to door to know his name,
The laughing-stock of children, and no home.

They're at it again, Owen. The village idiot
Who didn't know the war was over was right.

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Weldon Kees

JUNE, 1940

"Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory. They may be to the next. All a poet can do today is warn."

"The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori."
—WILFRED OWEN.

It is summer, and treachery blurs with the sounds of midnight,
The lights blink off at the closing of a door,
And I am alone in a worn-out town in wartime,
Thinking of those who were trapped by hysteria once before.

Flaubert and Henry James and Owen,
Bourne with his crooked back, Rilke and Lawrence, Joyce—
Gun-shy, annoyers, sick of the kill, the watchers,
Suffered the same attack till it broke them or left its scars.

Now the heroes of March are the sorriest fools of April:
The beaters of drums, the flag-kissing men, whose eyes
Once saw the murder, are washing it clean, accusing:
"You are the cowards! All that we told you before was lies!"

It is summer again, the evening is warm and silent.
The windows are dark and the mountains are miles away.
And the men who were haters of war are mounting the platforms.
An idiot wind is blowing; the conscience dies.

Richard Eberhart

"Mysticism has not the patience to wait for God's revelation."
—KIERKEGAARD.

But to reach the archimedean point
Was all my steadfastness;
The disjointed times to teach

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Courage from what is dreadful.

It was the glimpses in the lightning
Made me a sage, but made me say
No word to make another fight,
My own fighting heart full of dismay.

Spirit, soul, and fire are reached!
And springs of the mind, like springs of the feet
Tell all, all know, nothing wavers there!
All the flowers of my heart turned to ice-flowers,

Heaviness of the world prevailing,
"The higher we go the more terrible it is,"
Duplicity of man, heart-hate,
The hypocrite, the vain, the whipper, the cheat,

The eternal ape on the leash,
Drawing us down to faith,
Which the Greeks call divine folly,
The tug of laughter and of irony.

David Ross

NEWSREEL

The eye drags all of winter
Through the bone; and we
Are theatre to this death.
Also in dream
The lens remembers,
Taking death into focus.
Reel on reel
The eye records the season
To final footage of agony.

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Here is the shrapnel's odyssey
Cruising all corners of the flesh,
Exploding at each port of call.
Reel on reel
The bombs ride into office,
Breaking the city's will;
And rifles edit out the living breath.
Reel on reel
We film the photogenic face of violence:
His leer is on the lonely men
Who wither by the waters of Babylon;
His glee is on the children
Pieced together with their dolls.
Reel on reel
In close-up or dissolve,
A terror documents the mind.
Whatever the angle,
We focus on betrayal;
And we who are assigned to life
Are newsreel to this death.

David Schubert

THE SNOW IN THE MOUSE WIND

I.

Its cigarette twitches like a heart;
It smells of smoke, carbolic acid;
While wishes snore, it will write
Letters to the queen of hearts;
Its shuddered face it could not stop
Voice of the screaming, shrill roof tops;
Suffering with each bone it is;
It could not stop its ghastly sweat;
Choked in a terrible childbed.

And every street, too old, too cold,

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Too wrinkled to support that load;
And no brass buttoned voice, trumpeting out
The shell cracked and slimy rout.

And it is like a ferris wheel;
Up and down, the stars reel;
It takes the North Star, shines it more,—
It's on a plane tree it adores;
Whose roots creep up and down beside
Mumble grumble, seek and hide
Children: are its lullabye.
And for brown eyes, and for blue eyes,—
And how much for my baby? sigh
The mothers. And a penny cries—
So cold, the wind's nose on its nose.

Past panting lions with smudgy joys,
It whirls through a carousell of boys.
The century cracking to cracked toys.
Its whispers and complaining ears.
And then, from door to door, across
The whisper world until it hears
In stone and steel, "For god's sake, what

II.

"What are you doing in this room
Shivering so? (But it won't hurt
It really won't? tell me won't you?)
I'll touch you with my thought and we—
We'll walk out on the sea as one
Crosses the street, and on the sun
In amber day, before—but run!—
The road can catch and catches us—
(But the black buoys!—) and before
Those buildings lean down grabbing us—
Run! it won't hurt; learning's like
Learning to walk after a long
Sickness; singing, happy as
Singing children, all day long."

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Its cigarette twitches like a heart; "I
Beg you take the desirable horse
For hills that saddle a most unpopular
Course;—they once made a wish—remember?—you
Once made a wish upon a time, too.
The green gown was a window, a wind house
From which you frowned. It was a light
You nibbled at. You had a picnic of
Bright tulips on your hat. You said,
'It will always be like this?' Spoken
Between a laugh and a kiss. Won't you
Come with me, my dear, I beg of you."

It smells of smoke, carbolic acid, as
It pulls like a kite. "Crying, you
Want to get off? But you know, you've
Just died. Indeed, all the tears are
Counted, one by one, and safely filed away.
Respectfully dried that were respectfully
Cried. . . . My vanity case hides
Between your old words in the night."

Its woolen lashes laugh a brouhaha, "I would
Not go through that business once more,
Not in a million years. . . ."

Whispers of the snow
Complaining smoke and blood.
And wishes snoring while it writes
Letters to the queen of hearts.

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English Nightmare

Rayner Heppenstall

IT WAS A VILLAGE HALL of wood and corrugated iron. Half a dozen young men—all twenty-eight or twenty-nine years old—were already there, sitting on wooden chairs in front of the porch.

One said:

"They're full up."

But I went inside the porch and pushed open a wooden door painted plum-colour. A clerk in his shirt-sleeves looked up at me with anguish, half a dozen further young men (on a form in front of him) with dubious grins.

I said:

"I'm sorry, but I want to ask somebody about something."

The clerk said:

"Listen, I want my lunch sometime today."

I went out.

A clerk who was unoccupied had heard me from behind a screen. He came out.

He said:

"What is it?"

I said:

"I have glasses for reading, and I've forgotten them. Does it matter?"

The clerk said:

"I don't know."

I said:

"Well, I thought if it did . . ."

The clerk said:

"It's too late to do anything about it now, isn't it? I should mention the matter to the eye doctor when you go in. He's the first you come to."

I went outside and sat on a chair. The other young men were

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establishing fraternity. I couldn't be bothered. Others came. One was a good-looking A. R. P. warden with a club foot. A doctor appeared in his car, from the interior of which he brought out a packet of sandwiches. He waved to us as he went in. My bladder was aching. I wondered how long I should have to wait and whether I ought to empty it and trust to it partly filling up again before I went in.

A clerk came out and said:

"Three married men, please."

Three who were nearer to the door beat me to it.

Another clerk came out and said:

"All single men, please."

Those who looked married all went in. I remarked on this to a man near me. He didn't see the joke.

Presently we all went in. The place was divided up by asbestos screens. The clerk in the first compartment gave us forms to fill up for our marriage and child allowances. A fat young man with wavy hair and a moustache, who looked like a butcher and had been the centre of fun and fraternity outside, couldn't understand the form. We all peered over each other's forms to some extent.

A second clerk checked up our particulars and sent us into little cubicles to undress to our coats and trousers. In the next cubicle to me was a Roumanian. He said he came from Cernauti in Bukovina, occupied a few days ago by Soviet troops. The A. R. P. warden was running about stubbing the foot of his short leg against screens and pieces of wood. The urine doctor fetched us to a room at the far end and gave us jam-pots and lager glasses.

Half-way through, I said:

"I'm afraid this isn't going to hold it."

The urine doctor handed me a pail that I could switch over to.

The young butcher was looking sheepish.

He said:

"I can't go yet, sir."

The doctor said:

"Go outside and turn the tap on. That might help you."

The eye doctor wasn't interested in my reading glasses. He only wanted to know how far I could see. I read three lines of letters, and that satisfied him.

He looked at my form and said:

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"You're an author, eh?"

I said I was.

"You'll be able to write a book about this," said the eye doctor. "There's plenty of material."

I was passed on to the weight, measurements and distinguishing marks doctor. It was the urine doctor, but now he had finished with urine. He discovered the scar on my top lip, where Geoffrey Walker had caught me with an enamelled mug ten years ago in Saltburn, and told a clerk to put down "small scar on upper lip." This I did resent. It was only noted down in case I became a deserter. I felt a mild claustrophobia.

The joints doctor, who was the chairman of the board, was the first to require total nudity. While I was lying down on a camp bed, the shameful parts doctor came up to him.

"You see, he's quite hairy," said the joints doctor. "He can't be a hermaphrodite."

"He says it does come out occasionally," said the shameful parts doctor. "And his voice is normal."

They giggled.

"Well," said the shameful parts doctor, "I've always noticed that the larger the man the smaller the penis."

It was the Roumanian they were talking about. He was plump, bald-headed and gentle, and at a first glance he had no shameful parts at all. There was a normal mat of hair, but only a small valve nesting in it. The joints doctor probed my stomach and made me stand on one leg.

He also looked at my form and said:

"Author, yes? What sort of books do you write?"

I told him.

"You'll be able to write about this," he said.

"It's been done," said I.

"By whom?"

"Lawrence."

"Whom?"

"D. H. Lawrence. A long chapter called 'The Nightmare' in *Kangaroo*."

"I don't read D. H. Lawrence, but my son does," said the joints doctor. "Is it good?"

"A bit overdone," I said. "He thought it the final insult to human dignity."

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"Yes," said the joints doctor. "He was always a bit—er . . ."

"Touchy?" I suggested.

"Yes," said the joints doctor. "Wasn't he?"

I said:

"He was, rather."

I passed on to the shameful parts doctor. I had to turn my head to one side to cough. That made it seem curiously polite. I touched my toes, and the shameful parts doctor coughed in his turn.

"All right," he said.

The chairman gave each man a last general inspection and filled up his card. I sat in a little cubicle to wait my turn. I was able to inspect the Roumanian a little more closely and to watch other people going round. At any given moment, there were only two or perhaps three men completely naked. This fact allowed them to retain a certain individuality. However cursorily studied, they were not just so much meat. It pleased me to see the toughest men unable to stand on one leg, much less to go up on their toes on one leg. Also, I seemed to be one of the only two men who didn't have ugly little paunches. One man's paunch stuck out like a small, bracketed ledge and turned him into a marsupial.

The chairman who had also been the joints doctor asked how much exercise I took and whether I felt well in myself.

He filled up my card and said:

"What did you say the title of your last book was? I must get it."

He took down the title and gave me my card. I was marked Grade One. This pleased me. I dressed and went round to the military officer, who was sitting in a little box quite apart from all the doctors and clerks. He was quite different in temperament, too. The doctors were tall, gentle creatures of a rather fluttering, ineffectual charm. The military officer was squat and bald, a horrid little man in a bow tie. He asked me whether I had ever belonged to the territorials, what languages I spoke besides French and whether I had any hobbies—"apart from your writing, of course."

I went off to the tube station and took a train back to Kilburn Park. I was very pleased indeed to be Grade One and made the same joke to everybody I met during the evening—namely, that I was a perfect specimen of British manhood and that they were

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sending me in for a beauty competition next week. This is the only kind of joke that is understood in St. John's Wood. At my local, the Warthog was limping round with a stick and groaning. This public house is the meeting-place of the Local Defence Volunteers, and the Warthog had been drilling last night at a barracks, under a sergeant of the Guards who made his men stamp hard. The Warthog had clicked his heels together so smartly that he burst a blood vessel in his ankle. He had been to hospital and was told that he would need a small operation in the groin. The sad thing was that nobody believed him. As soon as his back was turned, the young Irish barman said the Warthog was supposed to be on armed guard all tonight and didn't like the thought.

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"Elements That Are Wanted"

Lionel Trilling

IT IS A CENTURY ago this year that John Stuart Mill angered his Benthamite friends by his now famous essay on Coleridge in which, writing sympathetically of a religious and conservative philosopher, he avowed his intention to modify the rigid materialism of utilitarian thought. Mill did not speak out for Coleridge for what are sometimes called "romantic" reasons—that is, because he thought transcendentalism was warmer and more glowing than utilitarianism. He did think so, but the reason he urged attention to Coleridge was that he thought Coleridge's ability "to see further into the complexities of the human feelings and intellect" offered something practical to add to Bentham's too "short and easy" political analysis. And he told his radical friends that they should make their prayer this one: " 'Lord, enlighten thou our enemies' . . . sharpen their wits, give acuteness to their perceptions and consecutiveness and clearness to their reasoning powers: we are in danger from their folly, not from their wisdom. . . ."

The book of Coleridge's which Mill mentioned most often was the volume usually referred to as *Church and State;* its full title is *On the Constitution of the Church and State, According to the Idea of Each* and it is from this work that T. S. Eliot's newest essay takes not only its special meaning of the word "idea" but also its whole inspiration.* Mr. Eliot has always said that a connection with the past, more or less consciously maintained, is necessary for intellectual and artistic virtue. For reasons which scarcely need exploration he himself has found his own most useful affinity with the seventeenth century and the thirteenth. Yet for all his enmity to romanticism, his own true place in politics and religion is

*_The Idea of a Christian Society._ Harcourt, Brace and Company. $1.50.

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in the romantic line of the nineteenth century. He continues the tradition of Coleridge and, after Coleridge, of Newman, Carlyle, Ruskin and Matthew Arnold—the men who, in the days of Reform, stood out, on something better than reasons of interest, against the philosophical assumptions of materialistic Liberalism. Their very language, if we except Carlyle's, is commemorated in his prose and to their thought this book is the tragic coda.

A century has not seen the establishment of this line of thought, but then neither has that same century seen the establishment, though it has surely seen the dominance, of the thought it opposed. What we see at the moment is the philosophy of materialism—of the Right, the Left and the Center—at war with itself. In that war many of our old notions have become inadequate and many of our old alliances inoperative. We all of us, from our own feelings, can understand Mr. Eliot when, in giving up *The Criterion* after his long editorship, he spoke of a "depression of spirits so different from any other experience of fifty years as to be a new emotion." But a really new emotion implies a modification of all other existing emotions and it requires a whole new world of intellect to accommodate it. Certainly the old world of those who read what I am now writing cannot give it room. Indeed, can we say that that old intellectual world of ours any longer exists? Disordered as it always was, it seems now almost to have vanished.

I am far from thinking that Mr. Eliot supplies a new world, yet in this troubled time when we are bound to think of eventual reconstructions, I should like to recommend to the attention of readers probably hostile to religion Mr. Eliot's religious politics. I say no more than *recommend to the attention:* I certainly do not recommend Mr. Eliot's ideas to the allegiance. But here we are, a very small group and quite obscure; our possibility of action is suspended by events; perhaps we have never been more than vocal and perhaps soon we can hope to be no more than thoughtful; our relations with the future are dark and dubious. There is, indeed, only one connection with the future of which we can be to any extent sure: our pledge to the critical intellect. Of the critical intellect a critic has said that "it must be patient and know how to wait; and flexible and know how to attach itself to things and how to withdraw from them." Perhaps Mr. Eliot's long if recalcitrant discipleship to Matthew Arnold gives me some justification for

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quoting Arnold once again: of criticism he said that "it must be apt to study and praise elements that for the fulness of spiritual perfection are wanted, even though they belong to a power which in the practical sphere may be maleficent." It is with this sentence in mind that I urge the importance of Mr. Eliot's book.

In the imagination of the Left Mr. Eliot has always figured with excessive simplicity. His story was supposed to be nothing more than this: that from the horrible realities of the Wasteland he escaped into the arms of Anglo-Catholic theology. This account may or may not be adequate; but as we review the ten years in which Marxism flourished among the intellectuals and then decayed, we can scarcely believe that this story, if true, is the worst that could be told of a man in our time. Whatever is censurable in it depends on the blind power of that weary word "escape" and on our attitude to theology. For theology I certainly do not make a stand, but when Mr. Eliot is accused of "faith," of the "surrender" of his intellect to "authority," it is hard to see, when the accusers are Marxist intellectuals, how their own action was always so very different. If we have the right to measure the personal and moral value of convictions by the disinterested intellectual effort through which they are arrived at, we might find that Mr. Eliot's conversion was notably more honorable than that of many who impugned his decision.

Mr. Eliot's book is a small one, it is not overtly dramatic and it does not have an air of "power." To readers of a different persuasion it cannot offer a solution that will seem more comprehensive or more practicable than their own; it can only serve them by questioning their assumptions. Its point of departure is simple, even obvious. Mr. Eliot, believing that a nation's political philosophy is not to be found in the conscious formulation of its ideal aims but, rather, in "the sub-stratum of collective temperament, ways of behaviour and unconscious values" which go to make up the formulation, is unable to find, what most people so easily find, a polar difference between the political philosophy of the western democracies and that of the totalitarian states. He does not say they are the same; their forms differ and their qualities differ. Yet the difference seems to him not one of principle but of degree; and when he considers how democracy is forced to defend itself from totalitarianism by adopting the totalitarian forms, he cannot think

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that the differences are dependent on more than time. To be maintained, the differences must be more than temporal, they must be principled, and Mr. Eliot cannot believe that the principles to be put in opposition to the totalitarian principles can be those of liberalism and democracy. Liberalism is a necessary negative element in politics but no more than that; as for democracy, Mr. Eliot says that it is so praised by everyone that its mention makes him think of the Merovingian Emperors and look around for the Mayor of the Palace.

But because totalitarianism is what he calls "pagan," the only possible opposing principle Mr. Eliot can find is that of Christianity. He cannot yet account England — the England which responded as it did to the events of September 1938—a pagan state, though he cannot call it actually a Christian one; it has a culture "which is mainly negative, but which, so far as it is positive, is still Christian." But because the situation no longer permits a negative culture, the choice will have to be made "between the formation of a new Christian culture and the acceptance of a pagan one."

More than once in the brief course of his book we hear from Mr. Eliot that he is not interested in Christianity as revivalism and he quotes a "distinguished theologian" to the effect that the great mistake made about Christianity is to suppose it primarily a religion and emotional when in truth it is primarily dogma and intellectual. We are not, then, to be concerned with Christianity as pietistic feeling but with Christianity as a precise view of man and the world, which implies a social form. But as we prepare to hear the Idea* of a Christian society we have surely the right to ask the proposer what, in his opinion, caused the failure of such previous Christian societies as may be said to have existed. We have, too, the right to ask him what it is in the nature of Christianity which brought it to the condition in which men and nations, trained in a wholly Christian culture, felt constrained to discover the inadequacy of the dogmas which are now expected to save the world. He might perhaps answer that Christianity is right but not all-powerful and that there are human impulses with which it cannot easily deal. Or if, like Mr. Eliot, he admits a dialectical-materialistic interpretation of the past but not of the future, he might find

*"By an idea I mean . . . that conception of a thing . . . which is given by the knowledge of its ultimate aim."—Coleridge.

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a material cause which explains the past failure without limiting the future hope. Well, we must not put inadequate answers into Mr. Eliot's mouth, but it is indeed hard to imagine the answer that will satisfy our historical skepticism, a skepticism which is aroused, too, by Mr. Eliot's unexpressed sense that there was once a past whose political virtues are worthy and possible of recapture.

So much for our premissed objections. They are certainly not diminished by the particular recommendations which Mr. Eliot goes on to make. He projects a society which will exist in three aspects—what he calls the Christian State, the Christian Community and the Community of Christians. This more or less Platonic triad exists, as we cannot help observing, on a rather minimal Christianity. For of the heads of his Christian State Mr. Eliot demands no more than that they be educated to think in Christian categories; for the rest, the criterion of their value is to be the same to which statesmen have always submitted—not devoutness but effectiveness. "They may," Mr. Eliot says, "frequently perform un-Christian acts; they must never attempt to defend their actions on un-Christian principles." The State, we are told, is Christian only negatively and is no more than the reflection of the Christian society which it governs. Yet this society itself is not permeated by a very intense Christianity. The mass of its citizens make up the Christian Community and their behavior is to be "largely unconscious"—for, because "their capacity for *thinking* about the objects of faith is small, their Christianity may be almost wholly realised in behaviour: both in their customary and periodic religous observances and in a traditional code of behaviour towards their neighbours."

What is left, then, to give the positive Christian tone to the Christian Society is what Mr. Eliot calls the Community of Christians, a group reminiscent of Coleridge's "clerisy" but more exclusively an elite, constituted of those clerics and laymen who consciously live the Christian life and who have notable intellectual and/or spiritual gifts. It is they who, by their "identity of belief and aspiration, their background of a common system of education and a common culture" will collectively form "the conscious mind and conscience of the nation." They are not to constitute a caste and so are to be loosely joined together rather than organized, and Mr. Eliot compares them in their possible wide effectiveness with

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the present body of segregated intellectuals who now write only for each other.

Of the specifically and immediately practical Mr. Eliot says little beyond submitting his Christian Society to judgment according to its success in carrying out the reforms projected by Christian sociologists. The natural end of such a society is man's "virtue and well-being in community"; this is "acknowledged for all" but "for those who have eyes to see it" there is also the supernatural end of beatitude. Culturally such a society is to be pluralistic—perhaps in a limited sense of that word, though we are told that even the Community of Christians will include minds indifferent or even hostile to Christianity. There is a certain faith in the good effect of smaller units of social organization than we now have; production for use is spoken of as natural and moral; the abolition of classes is mentioned as not an impossibility.

This, it is clear, is not a social vision likely to heighten anyone's ardor, but perhaps this is not wholly a fault when we remember that neither is it likely to engender despair by raising expectations not to be realised. Of its obvious inadequacies, some may be said to rise from certain deficiencies of Mr. Eliot's temperament where it joins with certain aspects of strict and theological Anglicanism, giving us such things as the cold ignorance of what people are really like, or a confusion of morality with snobbery or conformity, or even with a rather fierce Puritanism. More important than these, however, are the inadequacies which come from an insufficient view—insufficient even when we consider the self-imposed limitations of the work—of the relation of social forms to power and of power to wealth. Without a specific consideration of this problem even a religious politics—and even the most theoretical treatment of such a politics—must seem evasive.

Yet when we have understood all the inadequacies of Mr. Eliot's conception there still remains a theoretical interest which, in the long run has, I think, its own practical value, and this lies in the assumption upon which Mr. Eliot's society is based. Mr. Eliot has not written his apologia and has not, so far as I know, made a systematic statement of belief; but I think a sentence in his essay on Pascal makes clear what the grounds of his belief are. Mr. Eliot is talking about the "unbeliever's" inability to understand the way the "intelligent believer" comes to his faith; the unbeliever, he

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says, "does not consider that if certain emotional states, certain developments of character and what in the highest sense can be called 'saintliness' are inherently and by inspection known to be good, then the satisfactory explanation of the world must be an explanation which will admit the 'reality' of these values." This sentence, which could not have been carelessly written, indicates that Mr. Eliot is perhaps closer than he would admit to the pragmatic theology of Matthew Arnold which he so much disdains. But the exact nature of Mr. Eliot's theology is not for the moment important. What touches our problem of a whole new intellectual world and what I should like to take hold of, not only for itself but for what it indicates beyond itself, is the morality with which Mr. Eliot is concerned. "I am inclined," he said some time ago, "to approach public affairs from the point of view of the moralist," and over and over again he has insisted that to think of politics and economics as independent of morality is impossible: impossible in an ethical sense—the political and economic theorist *should not* so consider them; and impossible in a practical sense—the theorist *cannot* construct his theories except on the ground (often unexpressed) of moral assumptions. "I feel no confidence in any scheme for putting the world in order," Mr. Eliot said, "until the proposer has answered satisfactorily the question: What is the good life?"

Everybody, of course, approves of morality. Even Leon Trotsky, who was suspicious of the morality of all moralists, spoke well of it. But, like Trotsky, most people think of morality in a somewhat ambiguous fashion: it is something to be cultivated after the particular revolution they want is accomplished, but just now it is only in the way; or they think of it as whatever helps to bring the revolution about. But Mr. Eliot thinks of morality as absolute and not as a means but an end; and, what is more, he believes that it is at every moment a present end and not one indefinitely postponable. He does not mean merely social good and the doing of it (though this enters too) and he does not mean anything which is to be judged only from a utilitarian point of view. He means something that is personal in a way we have forgotten and which, in a way we have denied, connects personal action with the order of the universe. When he says that he is a moralist in politics he means most importantly that politics is to

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be judged by what it does for the moral perfection, rather than for the physical easement, of man. For the earthly good of man—the localizing adjective is important for Mr. Eliot—is moral perfection; what advances this is politically good, what hinders it is politically bad.

Now I do not think, with Mr. Eliot, that morality is absolute but I do believe that his way of considering morality has certain political advantages over Trotsky's way or the Marxist way in general. If one thing more than another marks the culture of radicalism in recent years it is that a consideration of means has taken a priority over the consideration of ends—or perhaps, to avoid the chances of a means-and-ends misunderstanding, we might rather say that immediate ends have become more important than ultimate ends. The radical intellectual of today differs from his political ancestor of even twenty-five years ago in the interest he finds in the immediate method as against the ultimate purpose. And if we take a longer period we find an even greater difference. The preparatory days of revolution—I mean the days from Montaigne to Rousseau and Diderot—were the days in which men projected a great character for man. The social imagination, when it was fresher, gave the worlds of the future a quality which our projected worlds can no longer have. The French Revolution was advanced on the warmest considerations of personality—one thinks of Montaigne's Montaigne, of Rousseau's Rousseau and his Emile, of Diderot's d'Alembert and his Rameau's nephew. And it is incidentally significant that, after this time, in every nation touched by the Revolution, the novel should have taken on its intense life. For what so animated the novel of the nineteenth century was the passionate—the "revolutionary"—interest in what man should be. It was, that is, a moral interest, and the world had the sense of a future moral revolution. Nowadays the novel, and especially in the hands of the radical intellectuals, has become enfeebled and mechanical: its decline coincides with the increasing indifference to the question, What should man become?

The heightened tempo of events will go far toward explaining the change—the speed with which calamity approached, our sense of the ship sinking and our no doubt natural giving to survival the precedence over the quality of the life that was to be preserved. Much of the change can be laid to the account of Marx, for it was

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Marx, with his claim to a science of society, with his concept of materialistic and dialectical causation, who, for his adherents, made the new emphasis seem unavoidable. Considerations of morality Marx largely scorned; he begins in morality, in the great historical and descriptive chapters of *Capital,* but he does not continue in it, perhaps because he is led to believe that the order of the world is going to establish morality. He speaks often of human dignity, but just what human dignity is he does not tell us, nor has any adequate Marxist philosopher or poet told us: it is not a subject which comes within the scope of their science.

Yet not merely upon the tempo of events nor upon Marx himself can we lay the indifference to morality and to aims. It must fall on something of which Marx was indeed a part and of which the tempo is of course a part but of which each of us is also a part: on the total imagination of our time. It is the characteristic of this imagination so to conceive the human quality that it diminishes with ever-increasing speed before the exigencies of means.

Lenin gave us the cue when, at the end of *The State and Revolution,* he told us that we might well postpone the problem of what man is to become until such time as he might become anything he chose. One understands how such a thing gets said; but one understands too that saying it does not make a suspension of choice: it is a choice already made and the making of it was what gave certain people the right to wonder whether the ethics and culture of communism were anything else than the extension of the ethics and culture of the bourgeois business world. For many years the hero of our moral myth was that Worker-and-Peasant who smiled from the covers of *Soviet Russia Today,* simple, industrious, literate—and grateful. Whether or not people like him actually existed is hard to say; one suspects not and hopes not; but he was what his leaders and the radical intellectuals were glad to propagate as a moral ideal; that probably factitious Worker was the moral maximum which the preoccupation with immediate ends could accommodate.

The diminished ideal which was represented by that Worker is what Mr. Eliot would perhaps call, in his way, a heresy. But from another point of view it is also a practical, a political, error. It is the error which lies hidden in materialist and rationalist psychology. Against it a certain part of the nineteenth century was

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always protesting. Wordsworth was one of the first to make the protest when he discarded the Godwinian view of the mind, advanced a psychology of his own and from it derived a politics. No doubt his politics was, in the end, reactionary enough; but it became reactionary for this reason as much as any other: that it was in protest against the view of man shared alike by Liberal manufacturing Whig and radical philosopher, the view that man was very simple and individually of small worth in the cosmic or political scheme. It was because of this view that Wordsworth deserted the Revolution; and it was to supply what the Revolution lacked or, in some part, denied, that he wrote his best poetry.

What the philosophy of the Revolution lacked or denied it is difficult to find a name for. Sometimes it gets called mysticism, but it is not mysticism and Wordsworth is not a mystic. Sometimes, as if by a kind of compromise, it gets called "mystery," but that, though perhaps closer, is certainly not close enough. What is meant negatively is that man cannot be comprehended in a formula; what is meant positively is the sense of complication and possibility, of surprise, intensification, variety, unfoldment, worth. These are things whose more or less abstract expressions we recognize in the arts; in our inability to admit them in social matters lies a great significance. Our inability to give this quality a name, our embarrassment, even, when we speak of it, marks a failure in our thought. But Wordsworth was able to speak of this quality and he involved it integrally with morality and all the qualities of mind which morality suggests. Eventually he made morality absolute and admittedly he engaged it with all sorts of unsound and even dangerous notions. But, as he conceived the quality, it was a protection against the belief that man could be made into a means and it was an affirmation that every man was an end.

It is a tragic irony that the diminution of the moral possibility, with all that the moral possibility implies of free will and individual value, should spring, as it does, from the notion of the perfectibility of man.* The *ultimate man* has become the end for which all temporal men are the means. Such a notion is part of the notion of progress in general, a belief shared by the bourgeois and

*I leave it to some novelist to explore the more subtle results of the confused denial of the moral possibility as it appears in the personal lives of radical intellectuals. They have used the denial, of course, to explain the conduct of men less equipped than themselves for thought; they have declared that the mass of men are not to be

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the Marxist, that the direction of the world is that of a never-ceasing improvement. So far as Marxism goes, this idea seems to have a discrepancy with the Marxist dialectic, for it depends on a standard of judgment which, if not an absolute, is so close to an absolute as to be indistinguishable from it—the judgment of direction, the certainty of what "higher" signifies and what "better" signifies. One has only to hear a Marxist defend (as many a Marxist will) the belief that through the ages even art shows a definable progress and improvement to understand how untenable the notion is in any of its usual statements. And the progress which is held to be observable in art is held to be no less observable in human relations.

And from the notion of progress has grown that contempt for the past and that worship of the future which so characteristically marks the radical thought of our time. The past is seen as a series of necessary failures which perhaps have their value as, in the dialectical way, they contribute to what comes after. The past has been a failure: the present—what can it matter in the light of the perfecting future? And from—or with—a sense of the past as failure, and of the present as nothing better than a willing tributary to the future, comes the sense of the wrongness of the human quality at any given moment. For, while they have always violently reprobated any such notion as Original Sin and by and large have held the belief that, by nature, man is good, most radical philosophies have contradicted themselves by implying that man, in his quality, in his kind, will be wholly changed by socialism in fine ways that we cannot predict: man will be good not as some men have been, but good in new and unspecified fashions. At the bottom of at least popular Marxism there has always been a kind of disgust with humanity as it is and a perfect faith in humanity as it is to be.

Mr. Eliot, as I have said in passing, has his own disgust; his

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held morally responsible for their own deeds and that only history and environment are accountable. I think no one can reject this generous assumption. But questions must arise concerning what method we are to use in the judgment of men who are our equals in moral and intellectual training. And the same question about a method of judgment must arise about oneself, for in actual practice we do not easily tolerate people who are content to ascribe their personal—I do not mean their practical—failures to circumstance alone. That novelists have not dealt with this problem seems to me to bear out what I said about the failure of the novel in the hands of the radical intellectual. Two exceptions must be noted: Malraux's *Man's Fate* and Silone's *Bread and Wine.*

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later criticism has shown his pained surprise at any manifestation of life that is not canonically correct. But at least Mr. Eliot's feelings are appropriate to the universe he assumes, and at least he is aware of them and makes provision for them. Of his universe Mr. Eliot predicates two things: a divine ordination and an absolute morality. From these two assumptions spring two practical conclusions which are worthy of note. The first is that the life of man involves a dual allegiance, one to the Universal Church which represents the divinely ordained universe and one to the nation and the National Church which represent temporal necessities; and the commitment of the National Church to an absolute morality makes, within the nation itself, a dualism, for the National Church, in its function, may be in disagreement with the national state. This dualism constitutes, Mr. Eliot believes, a barrier against monistic solutions of political problems such as statism or racism, and the tensions it creates are, for him, the distinguishing mark of a Christian society. The second thing implied by Mr. Eliot's assumptions is that there exists a moral goal never to be reached and a political ideal never to be realized. The world, we are told, will never be left wholly without glory, but all earthly societies are sordidly inadequate beside the ideal. This moral Platonism puts, of course, a check upon the hopes of man and restricts the possibility of "progress" yet its tragic presuppositions have this good result: that they bar any such notion as that of a *final* conflict and prevent us from envisaging any such ultimate moral victory as will permit the "withering away of the state"; they make us admit that the conflict is everlasting and in doing so they permit us to exercise a kind of charity by which we may value the humanity of the present equally with that of the future.

We say that our assumptions arise from our needs and must suit our intentions, and so they must; and perhaps in relatively recent times intelligent men of religion have been more honest in admitting the necessary assumptive elements in thought than have the radical philosophers with their tendency to hold all assumption illegitimate. Mr. Eliot shares this relative honesty and his thought benefits from it and our thought may benefit from the virtues his thought has. But if our assumptions spring from our needs, it is nevertheless still true that the validity of our needs and the relations between our intentions and our needs may be logically and

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empirically tested. So tested, Mr. Eliot's polity will not, I think, stand. If, for example, he believes that there is an historical instance or a practical likelihood of a church effectively providing the "tensions" he speaks of, he is, I think, deceiving himself. I think, indeed, that, whatever his intentions, the ecclesiastical instrument upon which he relies is, in "the practical sphere," bound to be maleficent. If I have tried to say that the assumptions of materialism have largely failed us, it was surely not to conclude that the assumptions of supernaturalism can aid us. Based as it is on supernatural assumptions, Mr. Eliot's politics is no doubt thoroughly vulnerable. But I have spoken of it with respect because it suggests elements which a rational and naturalistic philosophy, to be adequate, must encompass.

Nemea

A song in the valley of Nemea:
Sing quiet, quiet, quite quiet here.

Song for the brides of Argos
Combing the swarms of golden hair:
Quite quiet, quite quiet there.

Under the rolling comb of grass
The sword outrusts the golden helm.

Agamemnon under tumulus serene
Outsmiles the jury of skeletons;
Cool under cumulus the lion queen;

Only the drum could celebrate,
Only the adjective can outlive them.

A song in the valley of Nemea.
Sing quiet, quiet, quite quiet there.

Song of the frog in the empty well,
Tone of the bald bee on the cold skull,
Quiet, quiet, quiet.

Lawrence Durrell

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Roman

James Ross

THE NIGGERS buried Roman in their graveyard at Cross Roads. I went there that afternoon to do my weekly trading instead of to Corinth where I usually go. White folks don't go to nigger funerals as a general rule, but I had had a lot of dealings with Roman, first and last, and I thought it would look all right for me to go.

I took my basket of eggs and my kerosene can and started out walking. I would have hitched up old Beck, but I had been working her mighty hard that week and I figured she deserved a rest.

It was a fine fall day. I felt good as I walked along through the woods. I followed the old road that runs beside Ugly Creek. The trees along there are all poplars and sycamores. The leaves were already off the sycamores but a lot of poplar leaves still hung on. They were curled up a little on the ends, red on top and chalk-white underneath. I knew that before long all the trees would be bare. Thinking about the dying leaves made me think about Roman again.

I was going to his funeral out of curiosity; not because I had liked him. I was glad he was dead. I was afraid of him when he was alive. He had been under my skin for a long time and it pleased me to know that he was among the numbered, as the niggers say.

Roman was a strange fellow. Nobody knew much about him, not even the other niggers. He drifted in here about four years back, but where he came from was a mystery and he never offered to clear it up. Some said he was from Georgia and others said he was a South Carolina nigger who had been working in Pittsburgh, or some northern town until the hard times left him without a job. He once told me that he had been on the chain gang in South Carolina, but he didn't say where his home was.

He was a big, quiet nigger, about six feet three and straight

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as a string. He was a little cross-eyed, or maybe it was a squint. Anyway he didn't look right at you. Always reminded me of a copperhead snake I met in the woods once. It was on an old saw mill road that ran past a spring. It was dry weather and he was going down there to get him some water. He didn't think anybody else would be coming along there and when he saw me he stopped short and reared up his head. I reckon it was about time for him to shed his skin for his eyes were white looking, like two bubbles full of smoke. He kept his head straight towards me, but his eyes walled to the side, like he was looking at me and at the road at the same time. Roman's eyes went like that. Some folks that are cross-eyed look sort of comical but Roman never did.

When he first came up here he worked as a farm hand for anybody who would hire him. He worked some for me when my crop got in the grass, and at first I was suspicious of him, for he was a strange nigger. After a while, though, I saw that he was smart and close-mouthed and I got him to help me whenever I made a run.

I had the corn liquor trade in the lower part of Anson County sewed up. I had just about all the trade in Corinth, and while it is not a large town, they drink a lot of liquor there. I had a three hundred gallon still and I had to make two runs a week to supply the demand. I usually got about twenty-five or thirty gallons of liquor from a run of three hundred gallons of corn meal beer, then I would double back in the same beer and get about thirty gallons again. I always made good liquor. It kept me busy looking after it. I farmed a little on the side, of course, to keep the church folks from noticing my liquor business too much. I made a lot of money, but I let on that I was hard up and the Sheriff never bothered me because I always voted the straight ticket at election time and came across pretty well when he mentioned the County Campaign fund.

I never did trust banks. I always kept my money hidden back somewhere on the farm. Most of it I kept in a couple of half-gallon fruit jars hid under the old log crib. During the year and a half Roman worked for me I must have stuffed as much as five thousand dollars in those jars.

He left me one Saturday afternoon. In February, I think it was. I was going in to Corinth that afternoon and I asked him if he wanted to go with me. He said "No" and I paid him the three dollars I owed him for working that week.

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He put the money in his overall pocket. He said: "Mister George, I reckon I better tell you. I won't be here to work Monday morning."

I thought he meant that he wanted to be off Monday. "That's all right," I told him, "we won't make another run before Tuesday any way. I can get up the wood on Monday by myself."

He looked at me, only he wasn't looking at me, the way he did. "It ain't that," he said.

I started figuring. I hadn't paid him much for helping me. Usually I paid him fifty cents a day and his board and sometimes I gave him half a gallon of corn liquor. I never saw him when he'd been drinking so I always wondered if he sold that. Still I never saw him around with other niggers much. That was the thing I liked about him. I couldn't pick up another nigger as close-mouthed as Roman around Corinth. I thought I'd better come up on his wages.

"If it's the money worrying you," I told him, "we can straighten that out."

He shook his head. "It ain't anything wrong," he said. "I'm just in a notion to leave. I won't be back," he said, and when I got back that night he was gone.

I heard in Corinth that he told it that he was going to Old Man White's place and make a crop but if he said that he was a damned lie.

He went to Old Man White's place all right, but he never farmed a lick. He started making liquor with a tin tub outfit and he made the sorriest and rawest liquor I ever tasted in my life. But he could make it cheap that way and in a little while he was underselling me. After that he broadened out; in the end he took most of my trade away from me. I didn't like that but there wasn't anything I could do about it. I never did say anything about it nor let on that it mattered one way or the other to me. I could have made my liquor the way Roman made his, but that wasn't my way. I don't make any filthy liquor. If the people who drink it want sorry stuff that's their business. But they'll have to buy it from somebody else besides me.

I was the dealer. I shuffled them good and Roman cut. I dealt him the King of Hearts and myself the King of Spades. The

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next trip I dealt myself the six of Diamonds. Roman was holding his card close and pondering it. Finally he laid it down, face up on the table. "I'll ride on what I got," he said. Besides his King he had the nine of Spades. That beat my sixteen points.

I put my cards on the table beside his and said: "I'll hit it again." There wasn't anything else to do.

Excepting an ace, which we let ride for one point or eleven, whichever the player wanted, I had to have a four spot or a five to beat him. Anything any higher would bust me out. I waited a long time before I pulled off the next card. I could feel Roman waiting too, but I didn't look at him. Finally I picked the card off the deck and looked at it. It was a God-damned eight spot. I don't remember the suit it was in, but I can still see those little 8's facing each other from the corners.

"Well," I said, "that cleans me out."

Roman looked at a corner of the room and smiled out of the side of his mouth.

"You want some of it back?" he said.

I thought about my cotton money in his pockets and I wished he was dead and in hell.

"Keep the damned money," I told him. "I can make some more."

He was smiling again as he stuck my money in his pockets.

"Suit yourself," he said.

"I will," I said and I got up and left the place.

I went up town to the Dug Out Cafe, the only white folks' place in Corinth that stays open all night. There was a bunch of late drunks in there and one of them was sick. He gave me a short quart of white liquor. I sat there drinking the liquor and coffee the rest of the night. I went home at sun-up.

About two weeks after that one of the niggers who stayed on Old Man White's place found Roman lying on the back doorstep of the shack he slept in. His head was split open. They said it looked like the murderer used an axe.

The Sheriff came out and looked around some, but not much. They held an inquest and decided that Roman met death by violence at the hands of unknown parties. The Sheriff and the rest of the Courthouse ring were mighty busy along then because it was about election time, so they didn't waste much time on Roman. I guess

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they figured he was just another nigger and didn't have any vote.

. . . . . .

I got to Cross Roads at three o'clock that afternoon they buried Roman. I went to the store and did my trading. Swapped the eggs for some kerosene and some chewing tobacco. There wasn't anybody hanging around the store that afternoon. It was a fine day and I reckon all the white folks around there were finishing their wheat sowing or were out shooting birds, but a nigger never works on Saturday afternoon. I knew they were all out at the graveyard.

I finished my trading at the store and went on out to the nigger cemetery. There was a mob of niggers standing around the grave. One nigger was down in it, levelling it off, so that the coffin would go down in it without any trouble.

I spoke to them and they all spoke back. I was the only white man there but nobody looked like they thought it was out of place.

I hadn't been there long when Brack Mosley, a nigger who lived on Old Man White's place, drove up in his road cart. I noticed that he rode with his legs spread out, catty-wampus fashion, then I saw the coffin across the foot of the cart. It wasn't covered up. I could see that it was made out of pine boards.

Brack drove right up to where they were digging the grave. A couple of young bucks took the coffin off the cart and brought it up to the side. They sat it down. Brack looked around. I knew what he was looking for.

"Ain't there no preacher here?" he asked.

One of the niggers said: "Naw, we figgered on gittin Unker Izair Wall to preach de funeral, but he tuk sick dis mawnin. He cain't git here."

"Well," Brack said, "some of us ought to make a shawt prayer. Cain't none of you niggers pray?" Nobody looked up. Brack looked at me. I turned my head and looked off in the direction of Wilkinson's store.

They buried him without any service at all. They just put his coffin in the grave and began to shovel dirt on top of it. They didn't even put down any planks in the bottom of the grave like they usually do. They shovelled the dirt in as fast as they could. When they finished filling up the grave they started rounding it off at the top. Most of the niggers left then, but I stayed till the last. I sort

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of felt like I had to. It looks bad for a man to be buried without even a song or prayer, and nobody caring one way or another. I knew Roman was already in hell and a preacher couldn't have done him much good, but just the same it would have seemed more like a human burying if there had been a little more to it. The way they buried Roman wasn't any better than dragging off a dead mule, except they put enough dirt over him to keep the buzzards from picking his bones.

I could have ridden home with Brack Mosley in his cart, but I told him some lie about having to wait a while longer before I started home. The truth was I didn't want to ride with him. I knew he would want to talk about the funeral and I was getting mighty tired of thinking about Roman, let alone talking about him.

I waited till Brack was out of sight and then I started walking back home. It was not quite sundown, but the sky had clouded up and it got dark in a hurry. A wind blew up out of the Northwest and it was a cold wind. I walked fast but it was pitch dark before I got home. I had to pass the place where a man was held up about two months ago. I got kind of nervous. Every time a stick snapped under my foot I jumped. Once when a rabbit ran out in front of me I dropped the kerosene can and spilled a little out of it.

It was after seven o'clock when I got home. I milked the cow and fed her and the mule. Then I went into the house and lit a lamp. It had started raining outside. I could see the drops on the window panes. I wished I had some shades on the windows so that I could let them down. I ate my supper in a hurry and then took the lamp into the other room—there are only two rooms in my house. I was wet and cold, so I made a fire. But I couldn't seem to get warmed up. I was shivering like I had a chill.

I sat there by the fire, shaking like a wet puppy for a while. Then I got up and bolted the front door. I bolted the back door too, and rolled the old bureau that stood in the corner, over in front of the door that opened into the kitchen.

After that I felt better. The fire was burning up bright now and the room was bright as day. I pulled the table that had the lamp on it up close to the fire and read a little in the new "Blum's Almanac." Then I noticed that the fire was getting low. I got up and went over to the wood-box in the corner next to the window. I had just lifted up a stick of wood when I saw someone at the window.

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It was Roman. He stood there outside the window and smiled at me out of the side of his mouth. There was just the window panes between us.

I looked at him and it seemed like my very heart stopped beating. He had on old overalls and an overall jacket and they were soaking wet. A whiff of wind blew up the collar of his jacket. I saw the drops of rain beat up against his face.

I stood there a long time before I could move. Then I wrenched myself loose from him. It was the hardest thing I ever did. I jumped back against the table and I jumped too far. My elbow knocked the chimney off the lamp and he went away.

I started in and rolled the bureau away from the door and put it in front of the window. Then I slipped into the kitchen and slid the cupboard into the other room and placed it in front of the kitchen door, where the bureau had been. I pushed my bed over in the far corner from the fireplace and blew out the light. I kicked off my shoes before I jumped into the bed, but I didn't take off my clothes. I pulled the covers over my head and lay there. I didn't see nor hear any more from Roman that night, but I didn't sleep much.

I haven't slept much since then either, and I'm nervous all the time I'm awake. Every so often I see Roman. He used to come to the kitchen window until I covered all the windows with old Guano sacks. One night one of the sacks had fallen off and I didn't know it. When I sat down to supper I happened to look up and there was Roman standing at the window smiling at me. I had been hunting that day and my gun was loaded and standing in the corner right next to me. I grabbed it up and shot at him, but just as I pulled the trigger he went away. The shell was loaded with No. 8 shot and it shot the sash slam out. I haven't left the windows uncovered since then, but once in a while, especially just at dark, I will see Roman grinning at me from around some bush or corner. I have cussed him and told him to come on and fight it out with me, but he just smiles off to one side and leaves when I rush at him. I can't tell anybody about it, but it has just about got me down.

The daytime is bad enough, but it is hell at night. When it comes on night I get so fidgety that I can't be still. I have to keep looking around me to see that there isn't anybody slipping up on me from behind. Sometimes I don't sleep for three or four nights.

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When I get worn out and can't stand it any longer I will drop off to sleep and then it is worse than ever. I have nightmares about Roman and how he looked that night when I busted his head open. The Sheriff and the niggers all thought it was done with an axe, but it was a hatchet.

I went to the back of his shack about midnight and called him out. I stood right beside the doorstep and when he stepped out I hit him with the hatchet. I hit him so hard that it knocked him down. He just grunted when he went down and when I pulled the hatchet out of his head he just kind of kicked once and that was all. They didn't open the coffin at the burying, so I didn't get to see him then. But when I go to sleep I see him. The hatchet is still sticking in his head. He's sinking down. But his hands are clawing out in front of him like he knew it was me that hit him and was trying to grab hold of me. Sometimes I wish to God I hadn't killed him.

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The Cultural Front:

Leon Trotsky

James T. Farrell

THE LIFE OF LEON TROTSKY is one of the great tragic dramas of modern history. Pitting his brain and will against the despotic rulers of a great empire, fully conscious of the power, the resources, the cunning and cruelty of his enemy, Trotsky had one weapon at his command—his ideas. His courage never faltered; his will never broke. His children were murdered or driven to suicide; his friends, his co-workers and secretaries were killed. His entire generation was annihilated. He lived the life of a prisoner, continually exposed to the blow of an assassin. He was fatalistic enough to know that he would probably not live to see his ideas triumph. Nevertheless, he accepted without a moment's hesitation all the risks involved in the propagation of his doctrines. Finally, unable to refute his ideas, they drove a pickaxe into his brain.

During the last forty years Leon Trotsky's life was consecrated to one end—the socialist revolution. It was with the greatest of contempt that he looked upon the men in power who had traded their historic roles for portfolios. And how did their conduct compare with his when they too lost power and were forced into exile? Nomadic statesmen, they traveled from capital to capital begging favors from bourgeois public opinion, intriguing, maneuvering, manipulating, with the hope that perhaps the Quai d'Orsay, Downing Street, or the White House might restore their portfolios. But Trotsky was big enough to stand alone, always rising to the level of his historic position. In exile he produced book after book, a brilliant series of works unmatched in our time that, even more than the example of his life, remain the legacy of future generations. And you cannot drive a pickaxe into ideas.

I admired Trotsky as an historical figure, and Trotsky the man inspired me with affection. Even his critics have recognized Trotsky's brilliance as a writer; but his work is more than brilliant—it is fertile, suggestive, illuminating. Compared to its method, acuteness and high seriousness, the productions of our American political scientists and journalists seem morally flabby, spineless, full of facile improvisations. No political writer alive today can rival his record of almost clairvoyant predictions of later events.

Most of Trotsky's critics have presented him as a modern Machiavelli, hungry for personal power, who even in exile was desperately seeking to recapture it. This conception of Trotsky as a power-hungry Machiavellian falsifies his life. Trotsky, the materialist, took ideas with the greatest seriousness. He defended Marxism dogmatically. He defended dialec-

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tical materialism at times when neither its defense nor its rejection involved questions of power. His policies were based on his ideas. His decisions were in harmony with his premises and his principles. It is noteworthy that anecdotes about Trotsky, reminiscences of personal discussions, and his letters do not contain a single cynical statement about the methods necessary to attain power which one inevitably finds in the records of genuine Machiavellians like Napoleon. He had supreme confidence in the validity of his ideas. To hold to the conception of Trotsky as a Machiavellian, one must argue that almost his entire life, his voluminous books and his numberless letters were all a false front to mask a secret motive which he hid from his closest friends and collaborators.

For Trotsky, all intellectual questions were practical and concrete. His test for the validity of ideas was how they worked out in practice, in the actual framework of history. In this respect, he was close to the pragmatists. While Trotsky upheld some dogmas and was sometimes even schematic in his thinking, he was a relativist in his handling of ideas. He had an acute sense of the involvement of events in each other, of their inter-relationships. I recall how, during the course of a disagreement with him, he emphasized the necessity of conceiving a fact not merely as something which exists but also as something which is in process of becoming. This sense of becoming in events, of the relational character of events to each other was one of his most remarkable intellectual traits. He never isolated political events; he saw them consistently in their international setting. He was no crude empiricist, nor did he indulge in easy psychological interpretations as a substitute for objective analysis. Some of us thought that our general theories were at times more sound than Trotsky's. We even took delight in proofs that his philosophical formulations were not modern and could easily be refuted through logical analysis. Yet Trotsky was more creative with his bad epistemology than we were with our good epistemology.

Trotsky was a harsh opponent, never hesitating to break with friend after friend on issues of principle and policy. In this regard he did not differ from most men of strong convictions. In his thinking he was more inclined to draw sharp distinctions than to conciliate differences. These temperamental traits were, in a sense, psychological adaptations to his chosen way of life. Moreover, a man less intransigent than he could not have endured the blows he received in his days of exile. In public, Trotsky was often sharp, alert, metallic. Under questioning he was guarded and suspicious, inclined to break out in sharp invective or ironic statements. But his adamant side did not exhaust his personality. Many of his friends and disciples knew him as a warm and generous man. I think he wanted friends and tended to be excessively trusting with them, so much so that he often regarded people whom he had met only a few times as friends. In his personal relations he was simple and charming—a man of singular grace.

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Highly disciplined, Trotsky was unsparing of himself, subordinating all his impulses to his central purpose. I have never known another man whose very organism was so completely under the control of his will and intelligence. What he hated most was stupidity. In fact, he so hated it that he could not even listen to stories about the stupidity of his enemies. He was also impatient of incompetence. I recall how on a picnic Trotsky watched a friend try to start a fire clumsily. This friend had broken with him politically. In a bantering way Trotsky suggested that his friend's politics matched his ability to start a fire. Finally he made the fire himself quickly and efficiently.

One of Trotsky's traits that I admired most was his capacity for contempt. He knew how to despise those liberal intellectuals who, behind a set of pretentious gestures, invariably reflected the hypocrisy of bourgeois public opinion. At the same time such people puzzled him. A New York editor, who had printed attacks on Trotsky which virtually called him an assassin, requested to see him while vacationing in Mexico. He refused the request. But he was no snob. While intolerant of people who wished to visit him purely for curiosity's sake, he was hospitable to more serious visitors, regardless of their reputations or achievements. Thus he devoted as much care and thought to a letter to an unknown worker as he would to an article directed against a famous figure. He saw in everyone the representative of a class or of a social group, and in everyone's ideas he perceived their political consequences. His estimates of character, despite the charges of his critics, were generally not personal: they were political and intellectual. His brilliant character vignettes in *The History of the Russian Revolution* are actually social studies in miniature. In answering questions put to him by the Dewey Commission, he was most balanced in his evaluation of Stalin. He pointed out that Stalin did not become what he is today all at once, and at one time even Stalin was a good revolutionary. But to Lenin Trotsky had a personal relation. Even more than Marx, Lenin was (I think) his teacher. I would categorically discount the charge that Trotsky was really jealous of Lenin and used his memory to justify himself. On the contrary, his attitude to Lenin was one of reverence.

Some have been disconcerted by Trotsky's optimism and faith. But this faith, even if one cannot share it, is easily understood when one considers that they are necessary elements in any practical activity. What was to him a series of practical issues, was to his intellectualistic critics purely a set of formal questions. In formal intellectual activity we are not optimistic and believing but sceptical; and in some of his Trotsky's theoretical opponents this scepticism sometimes results in irresponsibility. While he was risking his life for his ideas, they are risking a syllogism.

Neither Stalinism nor the capitalist world can forgive Leon Trotsky. They will hate his memory, but they will never succeed in erasing it. History will know how to preserve it.

One of the best tributes we can pay Trotsky is to understand him. These notes are an effort toward such an understanding. I offer them in tribute to the memory of the Old Man.

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The Fate of Conservative Man

Guenter Reimann

As the flames of revolution swept over Europe after the Great French Revolution, Prince Metternich is supposed to have said: "My private belief is that the old Europe is at the beginning of its end. I, who am determined to go down with it, shall know how to do my duty. The new Europe, on the other hand, is still in the state of becoming; between end and beginning there will be chaos."

Once more is Europe in a state of chaos, and the conservative who sticks to the old order can do nothing else but "go down with it"; for the entire foundation on which the old Europe developed is being destroyed. The present period is one of chaos "between end and beginning."

The crisis of what is called Western civilization is bound up with the nature of modern imperialism. Spreading from Western Europe through the more backward areas of the world, modern capitalism has transformed the "virgin soil" of other continents into parts of a world economy dominated by monopolistic corporations, banks and trusts, which controlled thousands of enterprises, and even whole branches of production throughout the world. Special institutions and forms of investment were created which seemed to guarantee stability and security. Permanence was expected for the world monopolies exercised by the great "have" powers: England, France, the United States, the Netherlands.

But, as every one knows, this turned out to be a Utopian vision. The threat came not from the exploited colonial areas, but from within Europe itself, from the fascist powers which, as "have not" or "would like to be" imperialists, started a revolt against the entrenched imperialisms and their control of the world market. They wanted a sphere of expansion for their own imperialism, they wanted a share of the power and plunder of the older imperialisms,

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and they were willing to destroy the old world order to get these things. This is just what they are now doing.

Two questions are being asked by every one these days: (1) What drove Nazi Germany to struggle so implacably for imperialist expansion and military supremacy, despite the enormous sacrifices entailed, sacrifices so great as to endanger the Nazi system itself? And (2) how could the "have nots" compete against the far wealthier and economically more powerful "haves" with any chance of success? These questions cannot be answered by any theory of the madness of a Hitler or a Mussolini. The answer is only to be found in an understanding of the development of world capitalism, and in particular of the distinction between national and international monopolies.

National Monopolies vs. International Monopolies

Two stages may be distinguished in the development of imperialism: the earlier period, characterized by foreign and colonial investments, and the present period, which is based on national monopolies and home investments. The first, or pre-1914, type of imperialism, whose expansion abroad was secured by foreign investments and control over the world market, has been superseded by the "new" imperialism, which relies on autocratic rule, replacing the indirect power of money with the direct power of force.

Germany, of course, is the outstanding example of this new imperialism. It has never possessed foreign investments and colonial monopolies on anything like the same scale as Britain, and it has, therefore, from the very beginning exhibited the characteristic features of the new order.

National and international monopolies can easily be distinguished. A national monopoly is in control of the national market, while an international monopoly controls a world market. The latter monopoly occupies a position on which the entire world economy or world trade is dependent.

On the surface it may appear that national monopolies are not fundamentally different from world monopolies. Both rely on control of the market or elimination of free competition. The difference seems to be merely geographic. Both types of monopolies are, however, related to different types of world economy.

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An international monopoly can function only in a world economy in which the private business man can freely export and import goods and in which the international flow of capital is not restricted by governments. National monopolies, however, depend on Governmental protection and administrative measures against competitors who might disrupt the monopolist control of the market. International monopoloies essentially rely on financial or technical superiority. National monopolies rely on the absolute power of the State. International monopolies make consumers in foreign countries pay the major part of the tribute to the monopoly. National monopolies, however, tax their own people. Possession of world monopolies raises the national income by an increase of "incomes from abroad." National monopolies, however, only change the distribution of the national income and ultimately tend even to reduce the total of the national income.

The fundamental weakness of international monopolies was that they depended on a system of free trade and private competition. Their economic influence by far exceeded the political limits of the empire. This affected Britsh imperialism in particular. Its weaknesses could be used by young rival powers: the State became the supporter and often the organizer of national monopolies which resisted and attacked the old international monopolies.

A new unequal development of capitalism, unforeseen at the time the modern world economy was evolving, became possible as a result of the combination: State and national monopolies. New rival powers which came on the scene too late had no chance to gain a superior or merely equal position by utilizing the methods of private competition. The "have nots" (or rather "have no world monopoly") powers could succeed only by utilizing new methods—the absolute power of the State superseding the competition of private enterprise.

The entire basis of competition was shifted by the dissolution of the old world economy and by the use of the absolute power of the State to destroy the established world monoplies. Their position was undermined and finally smashed by national monopolies.

Adolf Hitler instinctively understood the new character of the imperialist struggle for power. This was revealed in his book *Mein Kampf* where he outlined a strategy to conquer the European Continent first instead of far-away colonies in Africa or in the Far

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East. The ultimate goal was absolute domination of the entire world. But the immediate aim was to subjugate the European Continent.

"The right way [for German foreign policy is] . . . a strengthening of the power on the Continent by winning new territory in Europe, thus making a later solution of the colonial question more likely and feasible."*

The Versailles Treaty compelled German imperialism to retire temporarily from other Continents. It tried, however, to gain new strength by forming a colonial Empire within Europe itself. In principle this corresponded to certain trends in the policy of the Entente Powers which made the Versailles Treaty in 1919. Hitler fully exploited this aspect of the Versailles Treaty in order to arouse a nationalist spirit which could be used for the next goal: conquest of the European Continent. But such an achievement can only reproduce the conflicts and antagonisms of the old imperialist system on a wider scale, as the final stage of a gigantic struggle to form a state capitalist world trust. Direct rule over the entire world, elimination of any competition is the way a national monopoly or a state capitalist trust must try to solidify its position and to increase its power.

The Rise of "Conservative Man"

Let there be no misunderstanding about the Conservative Man we are discussing here. He is—or used to be—a symbol of bourgeois solidity, a conservative who defended that liberal bourgeois order which had made him the "salt of the earth." He has nothing to do with the reactionary who wants to turn the wheel of history back to the Middle Ages and re-establish an order long dead. Nor is he to be identified with the independent peasant land-owner who ploughs his soil as his ancestors did and who lives on what he produces without close contacts with modern social life. We are speaking of another type of Conservative Man. He may be a state official, a bureaucrat with pension rights, a small or big capitalist, a retired business man, or an "administrator" with a comfortable and secure income; or he may be a shopkeeper with a big clientele and no competition to ruin him, or even a worker owning his own home, earning a wage sufficient to raise a family, with leisure and oppor-

*Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, New York, 1939 (Stackpole edition), p. 593.

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tunities for education. All such social groups are inclined to become conservative because they want to maintain the status quo in society as well as in their own private spheres. The more numerous these conservatives are, the easier it is to rule the country, to maintain "law and order" without the suppression of freedom and liberty for the people. When, however, such conservative strata do not exist, the Government must resort to suppressive measures, relying on military and police forces, on an autocratic bureaucracy which denies or restricts civil rights and liberties.

Western Europe was the international bulwark of our Conservative Man. Old traditions of bourgeois order in countries like Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands had created a strong feeling of economic security and respect for governmental authority. This gave particular strength to the Conservative Man. He represented that large section of the population which had secured more or less steady incomes and which thought it had a fair chance to make a decent living in the traditional way.

The Conservative Man pervaded all strata of Western society. His final growth was that of rentier. The rentier did not necessarily live the idle life of a retired business man. The industrialist regarded the income he earned for being a manager, as a "salary" or a rent which he was sure of for his entire life. Moreover, he often owned stocks and real estate, and other properties which secured additional income—payments of interest and dividends or rents. The small business man often owned an apartment house as an additional source of income. He was a rentier although he continued to run his bakery or butcher shop. And even many workers accumulated savings which gave them a feeling of economic security and imbued them with the spirit of the rentier.

There was neither need nor desire for changes in the political system as long as the spirit of the rentier pervaded the greater part of the population. "Unlike the small business man, the professional, and the artisan (who suffer under economic insecurity), the rentier is the potential adherent of fascism or communism only in the most unusual circumstances. For he is essentially a lever for the status quo, and his interests are those of the maintenance of property rights, especially the value of money. The rentier class grew up before the World War (1914-1918) and exerted a greater

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influence than its mere numbers would imply, for the rentier status constituted the goal of so large a section of the population."*

The average man usually takes for granted the ways of life to which he is accustomed. Bertrand Russell wrote** that the great majority of men and women in ordinary times pass through life without ever contemplating or criticising as a whole either their own conditions or those of the world at large. They find themselves born into a certain place in society, and they accept what each day brings forth, without any effort of thought beyond what the immediate effort requires. But this is true only to a certain degree. It refers to all social classes, to the lower as well as to the upper classes, to the worker, aristocrat, and capitalist. The latter might have more leisure—as a wealthy rentier—for contemplation and sophisticated criticism, but this is often done rather as a hobby than as a preface to action. In general, thinking leads him to become a conscious partisan of conservatism, and a defender of the social system which gives him economic security, leisure, and privileges. Without them, he is inclined to become a different social type whose ways of thinking and acting we shall have to deal with in other parts of this book.

The Conservative Man had become the typical representative of Western Civilization once the era of bourgeois revolutions in Europe came to an end, and bourgeois society was firmly established.

The Conservative at Home—and Abroad

This leads us to the clarification of a question which has often been misinterpreted. Western Civilization has been identified with the era of liberalism and democracy. Such an assumption is, however, not quite correct. There was a strange contrast between the Western Man who was, or may have been, a liberal in his home country, but who behaved quite differently in those parts of the world where he had vested interests threatened by mass movements. The growth of world economy put Western Europe in the position of a unique world center, but this development was not accompanied by the growth of liberal forces. The final development of Western Civilization was decisively influenced by the growth of

*_Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences:_ "The Rentier."
**Bertrand Russell, _Proposed Roads to Freedom_, New York, p. VIII.

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vast strata of rentiers among most sections of the business world, the middle classes, and even a great part of the working class.

The country which was especially typical of Western Civilization and represented its spirit best was the Netherlands; a peaceful little country, with many prosperous business men and idle rentiers, big and small capitalists who had accumulated savings, investors who owned stocks and bonds with properties spread over the entire world. In "garden towns," thousands of retired and active business men as well as highly skilled workers were living in their own pleasant homesteads. The Dutch burgher was in many respects a world citizen. He stood for the principles of conservative liberalism. He believed in the benefits of free trade and competition. He was a democrat in so far as he was opposed to feudal privileges and autocratic rule by the government. Above all, he was a defender of law and order, of any administration which protected private property rights and respected a high standard of business morale.

This burgher regarded countries which failed to pay their debts or to observe the laws of capitalist commerce as uncivilized and backward. He owned stocks and bonds which produced an income from enterprises all over the world—Malaya, South Africa, America, or Czarist Russia. He held foreign government bonds because these paid a higher rate of interest than the domestic savings banks. He did not care whether Czarist Russia was autocratic or democratic. His main concern was whether his claim for payment of interest would be respected and whether the foreign government could be trusted from the creditor's point of view.

With Western Civilization thus permeating the entire world, the governments of Western countries were concerned more with securing international respect for the creditor's property rights than with spreading democracy, liberty, and freedom. It is a fact that Western Europe's liberal governments more often supported anti-liberal, autocratic governments in other countries than progressive, liberal, or democratic regimes. The latter were often regarded as "dangerous" because they threatened to become too independent and did not fully acknowledge the inferior position of the debtor towards the creditor. They tended to shake off the economic dependence from the established world powers.

As far back as the eighteenth century this phenomenon was apparent. Bourgeois Britain did not help the bourgeois revolution

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in France but backed the reactionary Vendee against the young French republic. The British Conservatives preferred the Royal House of Bourbon to a parliamentary government, or even to Napoleon, because the latter was to them closely connected with the radical bourgeois revolution. In India, British rule has been linked with the interests of a small caste of princely and landowning parasites who are against democracy in India in defense of their own and of British privileges.

German imperialism at its best — under the Kaiser — also sought the cooperation of the most reactionary elements in foreign countries where it tried to obtain "control" or "cooperation." Imperial Germany under the Hohenzollerns supported the most corrupt, parasitic cliques in Turkey—the old feudal lords who suppressed any native progressive elements. Hitler followed this pattern. He expressly acknowledged that he would stick to the tradition. Even before he came to power, he wrote against those "national revolutionaries" who thought of fighting the Versailles Treaty in alliance with oppressed colonial peoples.

"Already in the years 1920-21, when the young National Socialist movement was slowly beginning to raise itself above the political horizon and live, and there was pronounced the German national freedom movement, people came to the party from various quarters trying to establish some connection between it and the *freedom movements of other countries*. . . . I always guarded against such attempts.

"As a German, I would, despite everything, still far rather see India under English than under some other rule."*

Habitat: Western Europe

In countries which were economically "penetrated" by Western capital and were indebted to the superior Western powers, the Conservative Man of the British, Dutch, or German type did not exist, or existed only as an exception to the rule. In Southeastern and Eastern Europe, economic life was stagnating while Western industries flourished. There the peasant was suffering from the dual burden of high taxation and indebtedness to big landowners, mostly former feudal lords who had become a new kind of super-

*Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Reynal and Hitchcock edition, New York, 1939, p. 954, 956.

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capitalist aristocracy. In these countries a few large towns became centers of luxurious living for a small aristocracy living at the expense of the peasants and maintaining the "law and order" which enabled foreign capital to exploit the nation. Only a small part of the population was absorbed in industrial enterprises, and the country suffered from a high degree of over-population. In more backward countries like Africa, the natives had found their old tribal existence destroyed without being prepared for life under a competitive economy. Or they had to offer themselves as cheap laborers utilized for the exploitation of national resources. The lion's share of commercial profits flowed into the leading Western countries which were the big creditor nations of the world. The backward countries were in an inferior position, and so dependent on world economy that an independent class of native capitalists could not emerge. In some agrarian countries, conditions may have improved but were not good enough to create prosperity for the middle classes and the rise of the Western type of Conservative Man.

The expansion of Western civilization destroyed backward societies in other countries without extending the relative prosperity Western Europe enjoyed before the Great War (1914) to the rest of the world. New technical means, railways, electricity, came into use in countries which were backward in order to facilitate the exploitation of raw material resources, but introduction of electricity does not in itself prove that a people are better off. Man cannot live on the possibility of buying a railway ticket or lighting his room with electricity. Social conditions in these countries did not develop in the same way as in the mother country. In England the misery which early capitalism created among those who had lost their own homesteads when the new industrial enterprises could engage only a part of the available labor power might be regarded as a temporary phenomenon or a childhood disease of capitalism. But in colonial or "backward" countries, the childhood disease became chronic. The profits which Western European capitalists derived from colonial enterprises and world trade reduced the consumptive power of the colonial countries and made the growth of independent national industries impossible. There was no chance for a gradual rise of small-scale enterprises and still less possibility for the emergence of conservative man who could play an important role in society.

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Thus viewing the world as a whole, the Conservative Man was the exception rather than the rule. He certainly gave to Western Europe the appearance of solidity and prosperity. But he did not exist—except as a pale shadow of the Western man—in countries which were parts of the world economy without an independent industrial life, and which had never reached the status of "creditor" nation.

Before the Western powers began to destroy each other in totalitarian wars, the growth of rentier incomes and of vested interests often was misinterpreted and regarded as a phenomenon which could be reproduced all over the world. It seemed to be the mission of Western Europe to reproduce its own social system everywhere so that Conservative Man would become an international figure. This prospect was an expression of the spirit of the rentier or conservative man. It was, however, in conflict with the peculiar position the Western powers had achieved under certain historical conditions which will never be reproduced.

The End of Conservative Man

The special conditions under which Western capitalism developed and which created the Conservative Man no longer exist. The social and economic foundations of Western European society were based upon international privileges which were undermined before the World War, and which will have become of minor importance as the final result of the second war between Europe's big powers. This makes revolutionary changes of world-historic significance inevitable in Western society.

After the first World War, in victorious France and Great Britain, and in little countries like the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Sweden, the Conservative Man remained the predominant social influence. In the "neutral" countries, independent middle classes which enjoyed a relatively prosperous existence were little touched by the changes in world economy which had resulted from the first World War.

These domains of the Conservative Man have been swept away by the tides of the second World War, which, like a tempest, is destroying the foundations of the old Europe and changing the economic structure of the entire world.

The collapse of the foundations of Western Society is little

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understood by those who are most affected by it. When the economic position of Conservative Man is threatened, he appeals to the national state and demands that the government rescue him. This is the hour of the rise of authoritarian dictatorships. But how can a national government re-establish the international privileges which once made Western society wealthy and conservative? The national state may try to find remedies on a national scale. The vested interests on which the Conservative Man relied, however, are international investments and a world economy in which the mother country enjoyed a supremacy over the rest of the world. The national state might try, and did try, to resume the struggle for world supremacy, but this had sinister results for Conservative Man, by further undermining the foundations of his existence. Yet the conservative man in the Western world who realized that his position had become desperate had no alternative but to ask for the help of a power which completely crushed him out of existence.

In a unique way, Western Europe has revolutionized the world by spreading capitalism; it has connected all countries and peoples on earth in a world economy; it has settled and cultivated areas which were arid wastes before the arrival of Western Man. Western capitalism has created both the most productive and the most destructive forces. It has experienced a long era of prosperity and the rise of the most solid bourgeois order; but at the same time it has created forces trying to organize a final struggle for Western world rule, using new forms, new means, new techniques, but applying European methods of destruction and suppression known only during the first era of colonial conquests of "backward" countries. This "final struggle for world power" is destined to destroy the very bases on which the age-old Western society relied, and to give birth to revolutionary forces with effects which still have to be seen. This kind of Western—totalitarian—society has a peculiar explosive nature and forms an astounding contrast to the Western World which used to be the comfortable garden homestead of Conservative Man.

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Mr. Brooks's New England

Alfred Kazin

AT TWENTY-TWO VAN WYCK BROOKS adopted with all the ardor of his characteristically spiritual intelligence the conviction that if a writer is not a citizen, if he does not belong or find happiness in his belonging, he is nothing. "A man's work is more the product of his race than of his art," he wrote in *The Wine of the Puritans*, "for a man may supremely express his race without being an artist, while he cannot be a supreme artist without expressing his race." Thirty-two years later, crowning that career with *New England: Indian Summer*,* that conviction remains Brooks's central, all-pervading idea, and represents the sum of his philosophic resources, which for him have always been spiritual insights. Brooks has never expressed that conviction so well as D. H. Lawrence expressed it for him in *The Flowering of New England* ("Men are free when they are in a living homeland . . . free when they are obeying some deep, inward voice of religious belief . . . free when they belong to a living, organic, believing community, active in fulfilling some unfulfilled, perhaps unrealized purpose") or explored it deeply; he misapplied it to Henry James, let it carry him too far on Mark Twain, and worked it so hard that he helped to inculcate that sentimental-pathetic view of the Gilded Age which lies at the heart of so much of the sentimental-pathetic criticism of the twenties, including his own.

Yet the significance of *New England: Indian Summer* is precisely that it makes impossible henceforth any glib, lachrymose generalities on the *via dolorosa* of the American writer in the seventies, eighties, and nineties. It constitutes, on a plane of extraordinary and always unceremonious scholarship, the first serious and detailed effort made, after Mumford's *The Brown Decades*, to examine some important segment of American letters between, say, Appomattox and the emergence of naturalism, in terms of the actual complex of manners and culture, rather than in terms of some convenient thesis. It is true that there is something disquieting in Brooks's prevailing sweetness, the unceasing effort to charm, the vague radiance of his prose, for they lead him into errors as mawkish and even dangerous as his misleading portrait of John Quincy Adams in the *Flowering* and the palpable effort of that book to persuade that Concord was a Brook Farm where no Hawthorne ever worked on a dung-hill; where, perhaps, there was no dung-hill? There is an astounding passage on p. 58, for example, where Brooks defends (or, rather, celebrates) Emerson's criticism of Goethe on the ground that Goethe was an old peacock and liked to wear too many medals anyway, while Emerson, speaking "by the oldest book in the world," measured Goethe by "the wisdom of Egypt and India." Emerson's honey-bee Egypt and India! Or another, p. 59, where Brooks states that the secret of Emerson's power was that he spoke

*E. P. Dutton and Company. $3.75.

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for the timeless things, while the greatest geniuses spoke for their time. Brooks evidently will not see Emerson in time or in his once human dimensions: the shrill ventriloquist of *America's Coming of Age* has become the Voice. Brooks is so ardently the analyst of sensibility that intellectual differences are always less important to him than personal ones, or the evocation—at which he is supremely good—of a common background of culture and aspiration. Hence his mediocre and, in a sense, fallacious portrait of Godkin, 115*ff.*, for the assumption an uniformed reader must make, on the basis of Brooks's desire to align Godkin and Wendell Phillips as critics of capitalism who wished "to restore ideals of the old republic," is that Godkin and Phillips were somehow alike. In fact, of course, no two individuals in the age had greater differences, while it is doubtful that the Tory Godkin comprehended the "ideals of the old Republic," which for Brooks are always so plain, sweet, and sure. Hence, too, the occasional things Brooks omits. As an intellectual Socialist for thirty years he might have pointed out in his chapter on "Aesthetic Boston" that one of the conditions of Henry Lee Higginson's endowment of the Boston Symphony Orchestra was that no member of it was ever to join a union. There are wasps and weeds even in Indian Summer.

And Brooks is aware of them, despite the inference one occasionally draws from a passage over-sweet, that he would like not to be. In the *Flowering* (which will some day seem less true) he was the acolyte before the vernal glories of the Concord mind; in *Indian Summer* he is the patient, loving, but fundamentally scrupulous historian of the decline of the New England mind. The difference between the young Brooks who taught an older generation to look squarely at the impact of post-bellum capitalism on the nineteenth-century American writer and the Brooks of today represents a gain in ripeness and subtlety, though it has cost him the fine Arnoldian edge. For the success of *Indian Summer* lies in its transcription of the whole life of a region and an epoch, which for New England in those bleak but not always barren days signified the first American realism, a tradition of eccentricity, exhaustive scholarship, and revolt, a revolution in education, and the slow, reluctant, profoundly significant diminution of hope. More than any historian of American literature, Brooks has seen, at the pitch of a Michelet and far better than Brandes, that literature does not reflect the life of a particular milieu so much as it is embedded in it—a point directly applicable to American letters after the Civil War, as it could be to the Progressive era and the 1930's, and one Brooks is brilliantly, often movingly, able to prove, to place, to affirm. He is, in fact, one of the very few historians of literature who have taken Taine's positivist rhetoric of the place and the moment so seriously, worked himself into it so deeply, that he has made it live. It is "cultural history, not criticism," yes; but criticism is always seeking to be something other than itself, and it is criticism of the first order that one finds in the greatest single achievement of *Indian Summer,* the rehabilitation of Howells. The long passage, 36*ff.*, for example, dealing with Howells's absorption in the conventional, summer-boarder, cheerful, *jeune fille* life of the American middle class in the eighties, a passage of pure

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impressionistic narration, is the only discussion of Howells in existence that conveys not only the exact quality of his mind but dramatizes the amenity, the scrupulousness, the genteel attractions of that mind in terms superior to formal critical statement, and incomparably richer in suggestion.

The technique of Brooks's New England books, as everybody knows, is the technique of the novelist, just as only a novelist's intention would allow Brooks to call *Indian Summer* a "sequel" to the *Flowering* or to admit, as he does in his preface, that he has emphasized Boston throughout to furnish "a unity of place." Brooks has finally released the artist *manqué* in him that led to his obsession over so many years with the artist *manqué*, and it is as a chronicler in the best tradition that he has invoked with exciting craftsmanship the quality of Francis James Child, Francis Parkman (Brooks the historian is always brilliant on other historians), Henry James the Elder, Tom Hazard, and the eccentrics "down east." Describing the drowsy moribund seaports north of Boston in the dead air of the late seventies, Child tending his roses, editing Chaucer, collecting his ballads, Andover as the last stronghold of orthodoxy, Sarah Helen Whitman, William James and Agassiz in the Gulf Stream, Henry James and Howells at Cambridge, Brooks is simply and superbly the historian of manners; but there is a shrewdness in him, a recognition of the tones and gradations that melt into character, that suggests not merely the historian as artist, but the artist of the modern era, Zola with his ubiquitous notebook, devouring Fact. And it is a genius for the remote, bony fact that one recognizes in the passage where Brooks tells us that during the Civil War Brook Farm was used as a training-ground for soldiers.

When Brooks is lame, as on Aldrich; or syrupy, as on Emily Dickinson; one feels defects in him that spring from a fundamental neutrality, a lack of interest in the conventionality of the first and an incomplete comprehension of the obliqueness of the other. When he is cursory, as on T. S. Eliot; or suspicious and uncomfortable, as on Henry Adams; or sentimental, as on Robert Frost, one can see that he has not drawn, as a writer of his type must always, a vital and stimulating relationship between them. But on little things—and, if one may so, little people—he can be magnificent. On Henry James he says nothing that he did not say in the *Pilgrimage of Henry James*, but he says it better and more directly, and there is a weight of evidence to support his deprecation of James "the old pretender" that cannot be dismissed. What is traditional in Brooks—the excessive sympathy, the protective coloration, the Amiel-like attempt to burrow under the skin—is here in full force, too; and as ever it is hypnotic, occasionally perplexing, soft, and if seen abstractly—but somehow only abstractly!—dubious in the extreme. But what he displays at great moments in this book as he has never displayed them before is a grace, a quality of imagination, a patient quiet knowingness, that belong to a time, so remote from our own, when querulousness was not acuteness, rigidity not austerity, scholarship not empty display; when the salt of criticism in a Hazlitt and a Sainte-Beuve—and Brooks is a younger, weaker brother—was its humanity, its curiosity, and its wit.

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The Defense of Britain, A Controversy

London, W. C. 1.

August 16th, 1940

Sir,

A remark in an instalment of my 'September Journal,' to the effect that if I had to choose between the system of Hitler and the system of Chamberlain, I preferred to back that of Chamberlain as the 'lesser evil' has caused so much controversy in PARTISAN REVIEW that I feel called on to reply.

When I first read your editorial disclaimer of me, I did not reply because I did not feel that it was necessary to defend an opinion to which I was not in any case committed. I made it quite clear that what I was trying to do in 'September Journal,' was not to state considered opinions to which I was prepared to commit my whole future, but to set down my immediate reactions to events from day to day. The responsibility I undertook in writing this document was not to discover a consistent attitude, but to make a truthful record of my immediate reactions to a violent and rapidly altering situation. I think that a record of the development of one open mind is as valuable in its way as what I assume to be the serious commitments of your editorials. It is a difference in the kind of responsibility one is undertaking. No one reading 'September Journal' would take a 'political line' from me, but from understanding my reactions, he might be helped to take a line of his own, that is all.

I agree, I should think, with your view of Chamberlain. I agree also that a social revolution is necessary in England. No one who has read anything I have written can possibly imagine that I was defending Chamberlain, or anything of the sort. The attitude of your correspondent from France seems to me hysterical, which may be understandable under the circumstances. The points round which the controversy hangs are 1) Whether one considers that the British government of Sept. 4th, 1939 was as great an evil as Hitler's government. 2) Whether if one thinks that Hitler's government is the greater evil, one is justified in supporting the 'lesser evil' which is engaged in fighting the greater one.

Dealing with 1), there are reasons for thinking that the Chamberlain system was preferable, for the good reason that it admitted, as we now see, of the possibility of being changed. I am strongly predisposed to fight for conditions within which it is possible for me to go on fighting for better conditions in the future. This is what I call fighting for the 'lesser evil.' I would certainly hesitate before joining a minority movement which was occupied in resisting the opponents of Hitler, however much I mistrusted these opponents. At the date in which I made my entry, there was not even such a minority movement, unless among the pacifists, as Harry Pollitt, the then secretary of the Communist Party had published a

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pamphlet supporting the war. The situation has altered considerably now. There is a growing demand for social revolution in England, but this does not take the form of a demand for surrender to Hitler. It takes the form of pressure on Churchill and the labour members of the Cabinet to remove the 'men of Munich' and to socialize industry.

There is a form of political purism which I cannot entirely understand. It is much as if Christians were to say "We cannot support the war unless angels armed with swords swoop down from the sky and destroy the Nazis." One might feel humble in the presence of such an exalted attitude of mind, but in the recesses of one's own heart one would not feel the necessary faith and purity to see how entirely reasonable it was to a careful reader of the scriptures.

Reading your editorials I feel the presence of a somewhat similar attitude of mind. The argument in your most recent one (July-August, 1940) is, as you state repeatedly, that the war is lost, the British and French are defeated. America will also be defeated unless Roosevelt is removed and there is a socialist America very soon. It is fatal to support Roosevelt in any attempt he may make to resist Hitler. At the same time, you yourself do not hold out the slightest hope of America becoming socialist. The implication is that the world is going to be punished, and very severely, because it will not follow the policy of PARTISAN REVIEW.

I admire the generosity of mind which has already presented the British Empire to Hitler before he himself has taken it, and which promises him the Americas, unless the democratic powers adopt the correct attitude in an argument. At the same time, it seems to me that there may be something wrong in the conclusions you draw from your premises. You say, quite rightly, in my opinion, that Fascism represents a more advanced stage of organization of capitalism than democracy. Accordingly, you compare the superiority of Hitler's war machine with that of Napoleon. You forget though, that Napoleon did not win. England beat Napoleon. Perhaps we may not beat Hitler, but in that case, may not the ratio of America to the whole of Europe be very much that of England to the Continent in 1815? Also, did England have to become Napoleonic in order to beat Napoleon? Or did it have any kind of sweeping Revolution?

Personally, I would never have drawn these historic parallels, but since they have been drawn, they should be examined. I do not think there is any basis for your excessive fatalism. Your own attitude really is simply this: that unless things happen exactly as you want them, you very much hope that something much worse will happen (for I assume that your attitude towards defeated democracy is really wishful thinking). What about Spain? I suppose you will say that the Stalinists spoilt that. Again, may be you are right. The pattern was not to your liking. But the pattern will never be to the liking of any of us. So we have to choose the lesser evil, and stumble from the bad to the slightly better or the slightly worse. Or else we had better join the hopeless angels.

Yours, etc.,

STEPHEN SPENDER.

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It seems ungracious, at a time when London and perhaps HORIZON'S own offices are being daily laid waste by Nazi bombs, to quarrel with the logic of Mr. Spender's eloquent letter. The importance and urgency of the matters under discussion must be my excuse for attempting a few words of reply.

Let us first clear up a misconception that runs all through Mr. Spender's letter: those of us who think bourgeois democracy historically obsolete and therefore predict fascist victory are motivated by either "wishful thinking" or "excessive fatalism." He also implies our attitude is one of "political purism," so that we reject anything short of perfection and, like sulky children, won't play "unless things happen exactly as you want them." These psychological judgments seem to me, in the language of the courts, "incompetent, irrelevant and immaterial." Mr. Spender will allow that it is at least theoretically possible that one might arrive at our conclusions through a process of objective, scientific anlaysis of the relevant social, economic and historical data. (It is even conceivable that an observer who himself desires neither socialism nor fascism but rather a preservation of the democratic status quo might also arrive at the conclusions stated above.) The arguments must be considered by themselves. It merely confuses the issue to introduce the sort of moral-psychological interpretations Mr. Spender throws in.

Coming to the issues, Mr. Spender apparently accepts my three main conclusions: the bankruptcy of bourgeois democracy ("I agree . . . with your view of Chamberlain"), the superiority of fascism as a way of organizing modern capitalism ("You say, quite rightly in my opinion, that fascism represents a more advanced stage of organization of capitalism than democracy.") and the necessity for a socialist defense ("I agree also that a social revolution is necessary in England.")

How from these premises Mr. Spender reaches the conclusion that we can beat fascism by supporting the Chamberlain, or the Roosevelt, System, this is not clear to me. He seems to propose both supporting the Chamberlain System as a "lesser evil" to Hitlerism and also overthrowing it by revolution at the same time. Thus he notes "the growing demand for social revolution" in wartime England, and says it doesn't take the form of surrendering to Hitler but rather of pressing Churchill to throw out the Munichmen and socialize industry. (In passing, I cannot understand why Mr. Spender thinks I am for surrendering to Hitler; the program in my article was proposed as a method of defeating Hitlerism, both abroad and at home.) Of course the Munichmen must be thrown out (and, by the way, have not yet been!) but Mr. Churchill must also be thrown out, since he differs from them only in being more energetic, able, and more realistically aware of the threat offered by Hitler to British imperialism. As his speeches as lately as 1938 reveal, Mr. Churchill has nothing much against Hitlerism as a social system. But I am afraid if Mr. Spender took steps to throw out Churchill and the Munichmen and socialize British industry—by

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organizing strikes in munitions plants, for example—he would find such activity incompatible with supporting the Chamberlain System as a "lesser evil." And if he tried to achieve his praiseworthy ends by persuasion and discussion, without withdrawing support from the Chamberlain-Churchill System, he would find it a tedious process. The British ruling class will not allow their properties to be socialized without a bitter armed struggle, and clearly those who advocate support of the Chamberlain System (that is, of the policies of the present ruling class) as a "lesser evil" to Hitlerism will be unable to lead such a struggle.

As for why I don't think Mr. Spender's "lesser evil" policy would result in anything except the weakening *of resistance to fascism, the arguments have been often rehearsed in these pages. Enough here to point out that this tactic has been tried out in every conceivable variety of situation since the last war, from pre-Mussolini Italy to pre-Petain France, and that it has, with tiresome and terrible monotony, invariably resulted in the defeat of the liberal-capitalist and the victory of the reactionary-capitalist forces. And, of course, in the involvement of the various workingclass organizations in the ruin of the bourgeois democratic institutions they tried to defend. What happened in Spain between 1936 and 1939 is the classic example of the fatal results of compromising the revolutionary struggle of the masses by giving political support to a democratic capitalist government as a "lesser evil" to fascism, and why Mr. Spender sternly asks, "What about Spain?" I cannot comprehend.*

A word about the historical parallel with Napoleon: it is true that Napoleon lost the war—just as Hitler may conceivably lose this war, or another one ten years from now—but what is important is that the social concepts of the French Revolution, which Napoleon's armies spread through Europe, conquered the older concepts represented by Metternich despite the military defeat of those armies. So, too, Hitler may go down, but fascism will supplant democratic capitalism because it is, in Mr. Spender's words, "a more advanced stage of organization of capitalism than democracy." The only alternative is revolutionary socialism.

Finally, I must say, quite honestly, that I see no immediate prospect of socialism in America. But I do see, both here and abroad, in the coming years the probability of more than one "revolutionary situation," as the present world order breaks down more and more completely. And I think we shall be able to take advantage of such future opportunities and prevent them from merely leading to worldwide fascism, only if we recognize clearly the realities of present-day society—however uncomfortable at the moment such a recognition may be—and only if the workingclass is not compromised and disillusioned by following a leadership which has tied its interests to the collapsing structure of capitalist democracy.

DWIGHT MACDONALD

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CONTRIBUTORS

PAUL GOODMAN, a young writer now living in New York City, has contributed poems, stories and criticism to *The Symposium, New Directions,* and other magazines. . . . HAROLD ROSENBERG, a frequent contributor to PARTISAN REVIEW, lives in Washington, D. C. . . . WELDON KEES is a young writer who works in the Denver Public Library. . . . JACKSON MATHEWS, whose verse we have printed before, teaches in the Central Washington College of Education in the state of Washington. . . . RICHARD EBERHART teaches at St. Mark's School in Southbridge, Mass. This poem is from his book, *Song and Idea,* scheduled to appear in London this fall. . . . DAVID ROSS is a radio announcer and reader whose poems have appeared in *The Nation, Poetry, The American Mercury* and other magazines. . . . DAVID SCHUBERT is a young poet who lives in Brooklyn. . . . RAYNER HEPPENSTALL is an English writer. His novel, *The Blaze of Noon,* aroused much interest earlier this year. . . . LIONEL TRILLING is the author of a biography of Matthew Arnold. . . . LAWRENCE DURRELL'S *The Black Book* was published last year in Paris. He is now living in Athens, Greece. . . . JAMES ROSS is a young writer who lives in Nashville, Tenn. As far as we know, this is his first published work. . . . GUENTER REIMANN is the author of *Germany: World Empire or World Revolution?* and *The Vampire Economy.* His contribution in this issue is a chapter from his forthcoming book on the economic future of Europe, to be published in the Spring by Morrow. . . . ALFRED KAZIN, who teaches in the English Department of Queens College, is working on a book on recent American literature. . . . STEPHEN SPENDER, well-known for his poems and criticism, is an editor of the English literary monthly, *Horizon.*

In Memory of

John Brooks Wheelwright

Poet and Revolutionist

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